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THE NEW REPUBLIC

Where the Buck Stops *The Editors*

The Death of the Reagan Presidency *Fred Barnes*

Can a Democracy Be a Great Power?
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FROM WASHINGTON

THE CASE FOR GLEE

The only irritating aspect of the otherwise delightful collapse of the Reagan administration is the widespread insistence that we must all be poker-faced about it. The *Washington Post*, second-to-none in moral dudgeon over the Reaganites' misdeeds, nevertheless declares that anyone who enjoys or is entertained by the spectacle is "reprehensible," no less. The approved attitude is to don the mask of tragedy: oh, woe is us, another failed administration, policy-making in disarray, etc. And, of course, what must The Allies be thinking?

The president's critics are required to appear even gloomier than his supporters—de rigeur, it seems, if you're going to go around invoking democracy and the Constitution. The columnist William Raspberry, having admitted that he cares nothing at all for Ronald Reagan and less than nothing for Reagan's record as president, writes that "only a partisan fool could find pleasure" in Reagan's downfall.

Dear me. Am I really the only one here who's having a great time? Would I like to share the joke with the rest of the class? Or should any right-thinking person succumb without regret to the fever of solemnity sweeping the nation? No, upon tortured reflection, I've concluded that the case for glee remains compelling.

First of all, simple honesty requires any Washington type to admit that this is the kind of episode we all live for. The adrenaline is flowing like Perrier. Everyone—Reagan supporters no less than his opponents—is wandering around in a happy buzz induced by those oft-denounced but rarely eschewed twin intoxicants, "gossip and speculation." Just as a glass of wine or two makes food taste better, a couple of belts of gossip and speculation intensify the enjoyment of reading the newspapers and watching "This Week with David Brinkley." C'mon, everybody, admit it. We're high.

Second, "disarray" is the essence of farce, and pratfalls are just as funny when committed by the National Security Council as when committed by the Three Stooges. The Iran episode has not lacked for pies in faces, missing pants, stubbed toes, confused identities, mistaken embraces, role reversals, strange noises, and other classic elements of lowbrow comedy. It's only human to laugh.

Third, it's a healthy democratic instinct to enjoy seeing the mighty fall, whether the mighty deserve it or not. No one was acting mightier, especially since the 1984 election, than the Reagan administration. Children generally find the story of Humpty Dumpty more amusing than tragic. When, as in this case, the mighty do deserve their tumble, it would be evidence of political decadence *not* to relish the sight.

Democrats and liberals, beaten down after six years of Reaganism, have every right to whistle a happy tune as they throw off their chains of timidity and go on the offensive. Politics is not just a game, but it *is* a game. The voices urging a weighty solemnity are the same sort who deplore the apathy of the electorate. But if people are going to be scolded for cheering whenever their side scores or the other side fumbles, they will quite rightly turn their attention back to professional sports.

There are subtler pleasures to be had as well. It's nothing short of delicious that contempt for democracy should have done Reagan in. For six years, democracy has been the biggest frustration of the president's opponents. As the November 29 *Economist* puts it: "In America more than most countries, politicians and scribblers like to thunder in the name of the people. They sounded silly doing that against a president whom the people loved."

It seemed to us, the carping critics, that this man was not terribly bright, not terribly thoughtful or well-informed, not terribly honest, and in most other ways not up to the most important job in the world. But a large majority of people seemed not to mind. And so a gradual consensus grew that if he lacked conventional mental and moral assets, he had some kind of special magic.

Even Reagan's critics became deeply superstitious about this alleged magic. They became afraid to say—or even forgot they think—that he's just an old movie actor. They themselves came to believe that to criticize Reagan personally was to cut yourself off from the democratic life force and condemn your soul to that circle of hell "inside the Beltway." Like knocking on wood or whistling past the graveyard, superstitious critics would preface any dissent from Reagan's policies with expressions of respect for him personally. One reason the president's political opponents nervously refrain from chuckling over his present predicament is a superstitious fear that the magic monster is only asleep, not dead, and the sound of laughter will reawaken him.

Democracy used to be Reagan's opponents' problem. Now it's his problem. As his poll results plummet, he waves his magic wand in bewilderment, puzzled that the magic doesn't seem to work. "This is a Beltway bloodletting," said Reagan in his appalling interview with *Time* magazine. What this pathetic remark revealed is that it is Reagan who is now trapped "inside the Beltway," isolated in a cocoon of advisers, cutoff from the democratic life force. And in fact the *contra* war has always been an inside-the-Beltway enthusiasm, which is what led to Reagan's difficulties in the first place.

Democracy is a terrible inconvenience. "The Salvadoran guerrillas or the Sandinistas don't have to worry about all this when they deal with the Cubans and the Russians," a *contra* leader complained to James LeMoyne of the *New York Times*, referring to Congress, public opinion, the press, the law, and the other impedimenta of the American way. The Reagan administration, on whom democracy had lavished its greatest blessings, couldn't be bothered with democracy's inconveniences either.

So there's no need for gloom. Liberals and others who feared for their own faith in democracy can breath easy. Reagan's comeuppance is democracy's salvation. It turns out that you can't fool all the people all of the time after all. Dry those tears and repeat after me: Ha. Ha. Ha.

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INTELLECTUALS AND RELIGION

Recently *The New York Times Magazine* carried an article on the "return to religion" among intellectuals. From Harvard to Berkeley, among both professors and students, and amid inquisitive people generally, there is an undeniable renewal of interest in the questions traditional religion raises and seeks to answer. This interest is largely a result of the failures of secular substitutes for religion (such as rationalism, narcissism, technological utopianism, aestheticism, and extremist political ideologies) to give abidingly satisfying answers to the truly significant puzzles in life: goodness, suffering, love, death, and the meaning of it all.

By no means, however, does this religious reawakening entail falling into the suffocating arms of a Rev. Moon or a Jerry Falwell, or embracing the ersatz gods of dog-eat-dog individualism, consumerism, or America First, which we see celebrated all around us these days. Nor does the religious renaissance imply a retreat from working for peace and justice. Rather, there is an awareness that, in the words of Jean Bethke Elshtain, religious commitment "can help further social reform," and that religion can supply the ethical bedrock upon which to make political commitments which are far more solid than those based on passing ideologies and enthusiasms. Nor does the new openness to religion signify a hostility to science, but rather an appreciation of the limits of science and the dangers of pseudo-scientific messianisms.

The New York Times Magazine article discussed the NEW OXFORD REVIEW as part of this "return to religion," and rightly so. We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW are spearheading today's intellectual fascination with what Daniel Bell terms "the sacred." We are particularly interested in exploring religious commitments which result in progressive social consequences, as exemplified by such giants as Dorothy Day, Bishop Tutu, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Lech Walesa, Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chavez, and Archbishop Romero. And we probe the literary riches offered by such greats as Ignazio Silone, Graham Greene, Thomas Merton, W.H. Auden, Flannery O'Connor, and Walker Percy.

An ecumenical and literary monthly edited by lay Catholics, we've been characterized by the University of Chicago's Martin E. Marty as "lively" and by *Newsweek* as "thoughtful and often cheeky." And there's no denying the *Library Journal*'s verdict that we will "doubtless command increasing attention."

Those who write for us — J.M. Cameron, Robert N. Bellah, Eileen Egan, Henri J.M. Nouwen, Robert Coles, and others — express themselves with clarity, verve, style, and heart. We bat around a wide variety of issues and defy easy pigeonholing. If you're keen on intellectual ferment and the life of the mind and spirit, subscribe today!

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CORRESPONDENCE

WILL'S TESTAMENT

To the editors:
It is disheartening that TNR would lend its pages not to a review of George F. Will's book *The Morning After*, but to an outpouring of personal venom against Mr. Will ("Tory Days," November 10). On the merits, Henry Fairlie's charges are preposterous. He imputes to Will just about every intellectual, cultural, and moral vice that can be displayed in print. Fairlie's implication that Will's erudition is false is made entirely by innuendo ("[Will] suggests" that American conservatives "appeal to Burke without having read the essay on *The Sublime and Beautiful*; has he?"), which is undoubtedly the safest way to make that particular charge. Will's judgment that Whittaker Chambers's *Witness* is "comparable in depth and power" to *The Education of Henry Adams* but that "Adams is less unsettling" is met only with a supercilious "Oh?" Since many share that opinion, it perhaps deserves more rebuttal than Fairlie's lifted eyebrow. When Will is playful, Fairlie complains that Will "belittles" "our cultural heritage." It must be possible to attack what Fairlie calls "philistinism" without resorting to humorless pomposity. Fairlie closes by implying that Will is a warmonger because he suggests it might have been better if the Soviet blockade of West Berlin and the building of the Berlin Wall had been stopped by force. Why not, Fairlie asks, count the Marshall Plan of 1947 a "far greater American victory? Because it was peaceful?" In his book Will states, "Truman made 1947 the most creative year of U.S. diplomacy," a judgment he supports by citing, among other actions, the proposal of the Marshall Plan.

It is possible to disagree with George Will's judgments. But it is not possible to deny that he is a lucid, graceful, economical writer, that his outlook is consistent, or that he is remarkably intelligent, logical, and well-read.

ROBERT H. BORK
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:
I heartily second Henry Fairlie's pin in George Will's puffery. Will's current popularity is almost as enigmatic a phenomenon as the "teflon" presidency. Considering that a state church, a ruling monarch, and most other elements of Tory paraphernalia are foreign to Americans, it is astonishing to think that Will has achieved guru status with his querulous days-of-yore intonations. Perhaps Lincoln didn't have it quite right, but you *can* fool most of the people most of the time.

STEPHEN PAUL FOSTER
St. Louis, Missouri

To the editors:
I have been reading Henry Fairlie's stuff for some years, and have just read "Tory Days," in which he "Brains George Will." May I pose a question: Does Fairlie have any sense of humor? I conclude he has none. The gentleman's ailment is the intellectual equivalent of acid stomach. Everything inside Henry is churning and roiling and gassily groaning, and when he belches up an insult it comes out sour. Send the poor guy a roll of Tums!

JAMES J. KILPATRICK
Woodville, Virginia

To the editors:
Henry Fairlie has set his sights on an increasingly problematic contradiction within American conservatism—and then fired his shots in the wrong direction and at the wrong target. The cultural anti-Americanism of which he accuses George F. Will is indeed a feature of the exceedingly loose alliance of Reagan-era conservatism. But mostly it is the religious right, and not men like Will, who have been preaching the anti-pop-culture gospel that goes with their wholesale repudiation of everyday modern American life.

Will admits freely that some popular culture leaves him cold, and attacks some of it for the message it conveys. For this Fairlie charges him, outrageously, with having an ambiguous relationship with his country. So Will doesn't enjoy rock music—though he has had occasion to praise the singing of Frank Sinatra. For this Fairlie charges him with philistinism, but surely it is a mark of the grossest philistinism to be indiscriminate in celebration and praise rather than measured and critical.

JOHN PODHORETZ
Executive Editor/News
Insight
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:
After reading of George Will's habit for dropping famous quotes and names I was reminded of a quote by Leonardo da Vinci: "Anyone who conducts an argument by appealing to authority is not using his intelligence; he is just using his memory."

BRITT ANDERSON
Dallas, Texas

EXIT POLL GENIUSES

To the editors:
The "Notebook" of November 24 says that your staff knew all afternoon on Election Day that there was "a big sweep for the Democrats in the Senate races." I would like to meet some of those geniuses that say they knew for sure that the Democrats won in Alabama (Shelby by 0.6 percent), California (Cranston by 1.6 percent), Colorado (Wirth by 1.6 percent), Georgia (Fowler by 1.8 percent), North Carolina (Sanford by 3.4 percent), and Washington (Adams by 2.4 percent). Exit polls can be pretty good, but not that good.

You may print office bravado. The people milling around behind Dan Rather were waiting for the actual vote returns to know for sure who won enough of these close races to give the Democrats control of the Senate.

WARREN J. MITOFSKY
Director, Elections and Surveys
CBS News
New York, New York

STICKY LABELS

To the editors:
In your November 10 issue Robert Kuttner refers to me as a "neoconservative" analyst ("Liberals Who Win"). I'm not a neoconservative, at least not so far as I understand the term. I like the fact that the other political scientists in his article were not affixed with some ideological label in connection with mentions of their professional work, and am sorry he did not extend to me the same elementary courtesy. Especially since, in conversation with him, I explicitly demurred from the ideological spin he gave my position in his published article.

NELSON W. POLSBY
John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
DECEMBER 22, 1986

EL NORTE

What is the essence of the scandal gripping the Reagan White House? Is it the apparent collapse of the Reagan administration's foreign policy? Is it a larger concern about the governability of America, raised by the sight of yet another presidency in shambles?

Only in part. Abstract considerations of foreign policy and presidential power are not the main reasons to be concerned about Lt. Col. Oliver North's siphoning of money from the Iranian arms deal. If they were, we would join the chorus for a quick conclusion, a clearing of the air, a prompt return to business as usual. We would agree that all Americans have an overriding interest in restoring public confidence in Ronald Reagan's leadership. We would join in the task of shoring up his ability to be a strong, effective leader for the next two years.

This scandal is about the basic attitudes the president and his men have held toward the law and toward democratic institutions. Restoring respect for these values not only takes priority over setting foreign policy back on track, or shoring up the institution of the presidency. It is a necessary precondition of those other goals.

The Reagan White House has displayed its contempt for the law in two senses. The first is the narrow sense in which Oliver North and Company may have run afoul of various criminal statutes—and that could include not only the arms export laws, but fraud and conspiracy provisions as well. There is the fairly clear violation of congressional prohibitions on government aid to the *contras* that were in effect at the time, and, of course, of the embargo on shipments of arms to Iran and other terrorism-sponsoring countries as well. And then there are plenty of still-murky aspects to the scandal that will no doubt be illuminated in the coming weeks. For example, after their departure from office, North and ex-national security adviser John Poindexter spent a weekend merrily shredding documents that might bear on their culpability and the culpability of others, a seemingly gross obstruction of justice that has prompted curiously little outrage so far.

More troubling is the broader kind of lawlessness that the White House has practiced. Whether or not any criminal statutes were violated, the White House certainly broke an implicit democratic contract binding it to act in accordance with the expressed will of the people's representatives. Congress had said no to military aid to the *contras*. The president signed the law. He may have done so regretfully, but Congress plainly had a right to enact it, and Americans plainly had a right to assume that this legislative decision would not be systematically subverted by the White House. Instead, the president's men decided to carry on the rejected program in secret. It had to be secret precisely because the White House knew it was doing something it shouldn't. The real crime here is contempt for democracy.

The White House now offers a special prosecutor to get to the bottom of the scandal and determine who broke what law. This is not as great a concession as it may seem. The investigation of an independent counsel, because it focuses only on the narrow question of criminality, often serves to excuse a sleazy deed that might not meet the technical criteria of an indictable offense, but is nevertheless wrong. Edwin Meese can attest to that from his own experience under investigation for allegedly failing to abide by financial disclosure laws and giving government jobs to his wealthy benefactors. An independent counsel didn't even absolve him of criminal behavior; the counsel merely held that if there was a crime, it wasn't worth prosecuting. Meese then trumpeted this finding as a clean bill of health. Meanwhile, the ongoing independent counsel investigation generally serves to siphon off the scandal and provides an excuse for officials to decline public comment. Heard anything about Michael Deaver lately?

Probably the only forum in which to air the broader questions of administration disregard for congressional prerogatives and constitutional procedure will be a select committee of the Senate. Reagan has also agreed to something like this. But it, too, is a far from perfect way of distinguishing truth from falsehood and guilt from innocence. Expect presidential contenders from both sides of the aisle to scramble for seats on what they will see as a chance for a star turn on the nightly news.

Special prosecutor, special committee, daily revelations in the press: it will be entertaining, but in a way it hardly matters. The search for a smoking gun is beside the point.

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This president's public charm and policy success—the Reagan Magic—have always been based on a jaunty optimism, a willingness to challenge established norms and ideas. But now this brash style of governance has shown its dark side. Call it the Reagan Hubris: the president's apparent view that his popularity in the polls and his staff's public relations skills (shown in their having extricated him from one jam after another) somehow granted him the right to disregard such trifles as the institutional norms of democratic government, the law, or simple factual consistency.

Indeed, the Reagan administration has been so contemptuous that it has jeopardized the centerpiece of its own foreign policy: the rebel movement against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. This scandal will encourage those in Congress and in the foreign policy elites who always have shrunk from the tough actions a great power must sometimes take on behalf of its interests. Many of these opponents never have been disposed to back the use of any military or covert means to advance even the most unassailable causes. Now they will seize on the transgressions of North et al. to discredit the very idea of aid to anti-communist rebels in the Third World.

They may well succeed, but they shouldn't. This sordid affair should not provide cover for an isolationist retreat to Fortress America, innocent and pure. TNR continues to support aid to democratic forces resisting the imposition of a totalitarian regime in Managua. That support rests on both moral and geopolitical foundations, the essential soundness of which is not changed by the unworthiness of the means the Reaganites have used. There is no necessary

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart

1. GET THEE BEHIND ME — 2 — 6

Iran cum Nicaragua. Heads finally started rolling in the sensational Iran-Nicaragua connection. The central question remains who else knew what when, with calls for special investigators, special committees, and even special sessions of Congress. Watergate is invoked hourly, with the sense of a circle-the-wagons cover-up fed by reports of document shredding. The White House can choose between portrayals of tragic-flaw arrogance and stupifying incompetence.

2. FREE FALL — 1 — 4

Reagan. Reagan's bigger-they-are fall is dizzying. Impeachment and resignation, even if raised to be dismissed, are actually topics of discussion. His approval rating is down by over 20 points, with his image of laid-back CEO now undermining him. The "good ol' Ron" persona, which helped Reagan past his frequent public gaffes, was always dangerously close to a bumbling fogey persona; now the fogey is taking over.

3. BLOOD IN THE WATER — — — 1

The press. Early, cautionary references to the "responsibility" of the press have faded in the frenzy. The fall of the White House has subsumed all other story elements. Hostage families are now invisible, and Iran, whose worldly dealings with such Satans as the U.S. and Israel at least compromise its holy jihad pretensions, comes off as Machiavellian. The Saudis were in on the arms deal too, but that doesn't seem to matter.

4. THE PARTY'S OVER — — — 1

Republicans. The GOP has gone in two months from being the party of ideas, huddled securely under the wing of a hugely popular president, to political disarray. Reagan's problems had become a partisan issue on the Hill before the *contra* connection arose. Now dazed Republicans seem not to know where to find cover. George Bush, wherever he is, has apparently fallen with the president on whose shoulders he rode.

5. PLAINS DEALERS — — — 1

Jimmy Carter. Jimmy Carter is born again, his presidency enjoying limited revision in the face of Reagan's crisis. Carter, Mondale, Brzezinski, Hodding Carter, and Jody Powell are all offering their wisdom on public affairs shows now, their administration moving from a benchmark of mediocrity toward comparative humility, responsibility, and control, though not yet efficacy.

6. ROOM AT THE INN — — — 1

The homeless. Cold-weather stories about the homeless are back, along with new sensitivity (when did you last hear the word "bum"?) and a statue of the homeless on the Mall in Washington. This year's angle seems to be the absurd cost of welfare hotels ($35,000 a year for one family in one squalid room in New York). Meanwhile, though, there are reports of a backlash— e.g., making dumped food inedible.

7. CREDIT WHERE DUE — — — 1

Consumerism. Merry Christmas. Americans, who carry some seven credit cards each, are overwhelmed by a debt that's doubled in four years. Card issuers, while writing off soaring bad debts, continue to push their cards hard, and have mostly abandoned the snob appeal that marked some of them. Debt counselors and collection agencies are happy, but many households already lose half their income in their card payments.

8. PAPER CURTAIN — — — 1

The McCarran Act. Arbitrary exclusions from the U.S. under the McCarran Act caused the briefest of flurries when applied to, among others, Canadian author Farley Mowat. But the case of Colombian journalist Patricia Lara, who was imprisoned without explanation as well as excluded, has evoked embarrassing parallels to the Soviet treatment of Daniloff.

9. FORCE OF HABIT — * — 8

Drugs. Drugs as a story have made a comeback. This time, though, the focus is on interdiction and law enforcement, rather than the personal drug victimization. Drugs are a problem, but not, shhhh, a crisis.

10. YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY — 6 — 4

Smoking. Women, who took up smoking later than men, are reportedly also more reluctant to give it up. Worry not. "Last Pack," a quit-smoking device, is available this year as a Christmas gift. Meanwhile, Singapore (!) has begun a campaign to remake itself as "a nation of non-smokers."

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

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connection between covert sleaze and the *contras'* cause. Indeed, we have long advocated full, open military support of the rebels. Swiss bank accounts and deliberate deception should never have entered into this.

As for Reagan himself, the verdict is already in. The president is unrepentant about the actions of his subordinates. He approves of what they did. In an interview in the December 8 edition of *Time* magazine, he said that Oliver North "has a fine record. He is a national hero. My only criticism is that I wasn't told everything." If this means anything, it means that the president would have said yes to North's shady dealings if only he'd known about them sooner. North is the embodiment of a policy that pursues democracy abroad while trampling on it at home. And Reagan has embraced him. Reagan also asserted: "This whole thing boils down to a great irresponsibility on the part of the press," on the premise that stories about the Iranian arms deal foiled negotiations toward the release of more of our hostages in Lebanon. This apparently means that the only problem with his men's actions was that word got out. It's also at odds with Reagan's previous claim that the arms deal wasn't meant to get the hostages released.

In a somewhat different vein, Reagan added that "Another country was facilitating those sales of weapons systems. They then were overcharging and were apparently putting the money into bank accounts of leaders of the *contras*. It wasn't us funneling money to them. This was another country." The president apparently meant Israel—though it could just as easily have been Saudi Arabia, which is also deeply implicated in the arms deal and the subsequent siphoning of money. In either case, this strange attempt to blame the scandal on foreign powers comes only a few days after a press conference in which Reagan had tried just as forcefully to assert that no third country was involved at all.

Cornered, the president drifts off into fantasy in a wild attempt to deny that a problem exists. He cannot even muster the common sense and self-preservation to admit he made a mistake. He is prepared to believe only what he wants to believe—and much of that is shocking in its moral shallowness. The Reagan Magic has come undone. The country should never fall under the spell again.

NOTEBOOK

□ NAME THAT SCANDAL: A year's subscription or subscription extension to the reader who comes up with the best name for the Reagan-Iran-*contras* festivities. Entries ending in "-gate" or "-scam" will not be considered. It's time to move on.

□ EDITORSHIPS AND DOUBLE STANDARDS: The November *Commentary* contains a startling piece of political obsequiousness by its editor, Norman Podhoretz. Called "The Hate That Dare Not Speak Its Name," it is mostly about the anti-Semitic ruminations of Gore Vidal in the *Nation* (a subject with which TNR has also been obsessed from time to time). Podhoretz notes the virtual silence about Vidal's anti-Semitic writings, and occasional apologies for them, on the left. He draws a contrast between this and the supposedly sterner reaction among American conservatives to similarly anti-Semitic writings of one Joseph Sobran, a sparsely syndicated right-wing columnist and crank. What is the evidence for this contrast? Podhoretz musters the words of William F. Buckley Jr. Buckley had written that while he and his colleagues at *National Review* were sure that Sobran was not really anti-Semitic, anyone who did not really know him "might reasonably conclude that those columns were written by a writer inclined to anti-Semitism. . . . Accordingly, I hereby dissociate myself and my colleagues from what we view as the obstinate tendentiousness of Joe Sobran's recent columns." Obstinate tendentiousness? Podhoretz calls this "outrage" and "repudiation." We call it squeamish, equivocating, and forced. Sobran is still a senior editor of *National Review*, even more in the official good graces of his circles than Vidal is of his. If Podhoretz can't even recognize a refusal by the right to reject anti-Semitism, he is not likely to recognize anything morally objectionable on the right at all. And that is obsequious behavior. Or, as Irving Howe put it with reference to *Nation* editor Victor Navasky's own craven attitude toward Vidal, it is the spirit of Uriah Heap—hardly what one expects from someone so unafraid of breaking ranks.

□ OUT ON A LIMB: "With a unanimity rare in Washington, leading Republican and Democratic politicians agreed today that the disclosure of payments to Nicaraguan rebels and the departure of two White House aides had probably hurt the Administration more than it helped."—page one "news analysis" by R. W. Apple, *New York Times*, November 26.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

THE END

THE GENIALITY WENT first. When President Reagan came to the White House pressroom on November 25, he was in a sour mood. After disclosing that he hadn't been "fully informed" about the diversion of money from the Iranian arms deal to the *contras*, Reagan glowered at reporters who peppered him with questions as he stepped down from the podium. Ordinarily, he answers a question or two, and turns aside others with a head bob and a grin. Not this time. Pressed on whether he'd admit to having made a mistake in authorizing the arms sale, Reagan snapped, "No," and stalked off. The next day, without telling aides, he chatted with Hugh Sidey of *Time*, and his comments on the Iran mess were petulant.

This is the fellow renowned for his cheerful imperturbability even in the most trying circumstances. At an airport

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rally in Denver last September, a loud crack interrupted Reagan's speech. The crowd cringed, but Reagan quickly ad-libbed, "It missed me." Now he senses serious trouble, and his savoir faire has abandoned him. In truth, it's even worse than he imagines. This isn't another Bitburg flap. Reagan knew that after he visited the German war cemetery at Bitburg in 1985, the matter would fade. But the controversy over selling arms to Iran has no termination date. For Reagan, the worst is at hand. The administration has lost control of events. Suddenly it is no longer the dominant force in American politics and government.

The de facto end of the Reagan presidency came at the precise moment—noon, November 25—the White House disclosed that proceeds from the arms sale had been laundered and funneled to the *contras*. The *contra* angle is critical. If the issue were only the weapons deal with Iran, Reagan could handle it. "That's a policy decision," says a Reagan adviser, "and the fight would be over whether it was correct or not. The president would be fighting on his own turf."

The secret funding of the *contras* made the possibility of law violations the new epicenter of the controversy. A fight over policy became a criminal case, a full-blown scandal with innumerable investigative leads. This took the matter out of Reagan's hands, and made a special prosecutor and prolonged congressional hearings inevitable. And the press went wild.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Reagan's top aides didn't catch on any more than he did. Donald T. Regan, the chief of staff, airily dismissed calls for his ouster. "Don spent a lot of time on Wall Street," says a Regan assistant, "and he doesn't jump out of the window every time the market turns down." Fine, but this is the Reagan presidency's equivalent of the Depression, non-stop hard times. Under Regan's supervision, the White House embarked on November 30, the Sunday after Thanksgiving, on an effort to micro-manage the news. The goal: get out a story a day showing how aggressively the president was attacking the crisis and pursuing the truth. "You want to get out in front of the process," says a senior aide. "He has to show not only that he's saying but that he's doing things to get at the facts." The aide claimed immediate success, pointing to the front-page headline in *USA Today* on December 1. It quoted Reagan: "We'll get to the bottom of this . . ." The next day's story was Reagan's meeting with a special commission investigating the National Security Council. Then it was Reagan's nationally televised announcement that a special prosecutor would be sought and that Frank Carlucci would be his new national security adviser, succeeding the deposed John Poindexter. And so on.

Reagan's aides also tried to figure out a way the president could admit to having made a terrible mistake without saying that in so many words. Before Reagan's press conference on November 19, Patrick Buchanan, the White House communications director, and other aides were prepared to urge the president to declare flatly, on national TV, that he'd flubbed. But they found Reagan so resistant to such advice—and so prickly on the subject—that they shrank from recommending it. "Reagan never says he made a mistake," says one official. "He didn't do that after the Marines were killed in Lebanon. He just withdrew the rest of the troops. He needs to do something like that again."

Finding an opportunity wasn't easy. And not surprisingly, the Regan team resisted the obvious alternative, what one of them calls "the big bang solution." That means firing Regan and his subordinates. "I thought for a second that would solve the problem," says one of them. "It won't. It will only reinforce a view that's not accurate, that all these people had knowledge [of the arms deal and secret *contra* funding] and were involved."

Don't expect boldness from an embattled Reagan White House. In picking veteran bureaucrat Carlucci to head the National Security Council staff, Reagan took the course of least resistance. Navy Secretary John Lehman was strongly recommended for the post, but he was criticized for not being a team player. Attorney General

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Edwin Meese, in a fit of pettiness, blamed Lehman for having publicly criticized the Justice Department's plea bargain with spy John Walker. Jeane Kirkpatrick, the former United Nations ambassador, had some support, but Reagan didn't want to irritate Secretary of State George Shultz by appointing her. David Abshire, the U.S. envoy to NATO, had no detractors, but no strong supporters either. Carlucci had the backing of Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger. (He was Weinberger's deputy in Reagan's first term.) For a White House going nowhere, Carlucci was perfect. At Defense, he'd greeted Shultz's appointment as secretary of state with enthusiasm. Shultz was prudent and diplomatic, Carlucci said. "People like that never choose sides," he added admiringly.

Reagan's biggest problem is how to change the subject. Taking the country's mind off the scandal that's bedeviling you is a major step in recovering from it. But the president can't manage this because he doesn't have much else on his mind anymore. "There aren't a lot of ideas around this place right now," says a White House official. Reagan has already gotten the main things he wanted, tax cuts and a military buildup, but still he has two years left in office. Sure, he could agree to an arms control treaty with the Soviets, but that would mean giving up on Star Wars. In November he listed "budget reform" as his top priority in 1987. That's not likely to take anyone's mind off scandal. Nor is Reagan's need to play goalie, swatting away bids to eliminate military aid to the *contras* and to pare spending for Star Wars. In last fall's campaign it became clear that Reagan's cupboard is bare. In September a dozen of his top political advisers met to decide what issue he should emphasize. According to David Hoffman of the *Washington Post*, there was near unanimity that he should talk about drugs. He did, pilfering the issue from his wife, Nancy. When Reagan is forced to draw from the First Lady's agenda, he's spent.

HE'S ALSO ALONE. Conservatives have rallied to Reagan's side in the past, but they are virtually silent on the arms deal. One conservative group, Citizens for America, offered a defense, only to find itself under attack by the *Manchester Union-Leader*, the nation's most stridently conservative paper. "Giving arms to a bunch of terrorists is hard to defend," says Jeffrey Bell, a conservative strategist. "People are thrown by it. They're not unwilling to save Reagan. But they don't know what ground to stand on." *Human Events*, the weekly conservative paper that Reagan reads regularly, chose to push for a conservative replacement for Shultz as secretary of state, and gave the president only a halfhearted defense. On December 1, a dozen conservative leaders met in a Washington hotel and talked about distancing themselves from Reagan. Only one, William Kristol, spoke up for Reagan.

The president has himself to blame. Detachment from the details of government—the Reagan style, in other words—was bound to bring trouble sooner or later. It happened later. Now, after six reasonably productive years come two years of strife and drift. Whatever Reagan wants from Congress, if he wants anything, he'll have enormous trouble getting. He's as circumscribed as Gerald Ford was after pardoning Nixon. When Ford picked a Supreme Court justice, he had one criterion: Can this guy get confirmed?

Reagan never expected this to happen. In one of his self-effacing jokes, he tells the story of two psychiatrists, one old, one young. They both show up each day for work scrubbed, immaculately dressed, and alert. But at the end of the day, the youngster is frazzled and disheveled, the old man fresh as ever. One day, the young psychiatrist asks, "How do you do it, stay fresh after hearing patients all day?" The old psychiatrist pauses and then says, "I never listen." Reagan should have.

FRED BARNES

Ends and means, 'contra'-style.

OLIVER'S ARMY

H. L. MENCKEN JOKED that "Every man kills the thing he loves. For example, the amateur musician." Today Mencken might cite Ronald ("I'm a *contra*") Reagan. Members of Congress, reporters, and the *contras* themselves say the revelation that Lt. Col. Oliver North apparently funded the Nicaraguan rebels with the profits from the illegal Iranian arms deal may doom the insurgency. Whether Reagan was duped by North or (as seems more likely) he tacitly approved of North's actions all along scarcely matters. By exposing how North ran the administration's anti-Sandinista policy outside the law, Reagan has dealt a more crushing blow to the *contras* than any Soviet-equipped Sandinista battalion ever could.

The *contras* and their supporters in Washington are now attempting a dignified retreat. They contend that North's illegal action in support of the *contras* does not mean that the fight against Sandinista tyranny is any less urgent or legitimate. Illicit means, they say, should not taint just ends. When *contra* funding comes up for a vote in Congress sometime next spring, the means-and-ends argument is likely to be the *contras'* first line of defense.

As a matter of abstract logic, the point is indisputable. A good cause can obviously be promoted in bad ways without discrediting the cause. But ends cannot be so neatly distinguished (and insulated) from means. In the real world, means achieve ends, and those ends in turn are only means for more ambitious ends. The *contras* have a bad habit. At each stage of the process, they ask the U.S. Congress to overlook their anti-democratic means.

When the Reagan administration began aiding the *contras* in early 1981, means and ends were modest and unsavory. The end was to create an army to overthrow the Sandinista government. The means? The CIA arranged for

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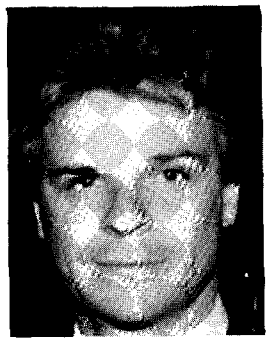

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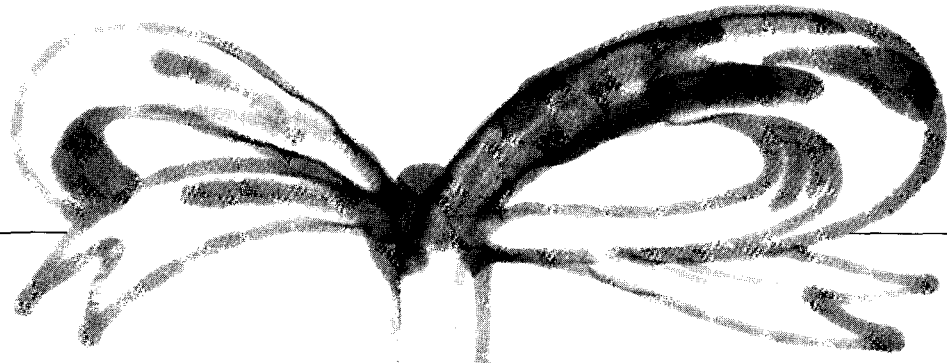

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the military dictatorship of Argentina to send some of its security officers to train the remnants of Somoza's national guard. These Argentine officers were among those active in a government-directed reign of terror in the late 1970s—the "death squads"—that killed at least 9,000 people. *Contra* supporters say that their movement has now fundamentally changed and that this early history should not taint the ends of creating a democratic Nicaragua.

Once the insurgency had been created, the administration's aim was to give it political legitimacy. This was difficult because of the presence of former Somocistas, widespread reports of massacres of civilians, and internal bloodletting. The means to dispel this image? The CIA brought together a variety of disgruntled Nicaraguan exiles in 1982, put them up in a Fort Lauderdale hotel, coached them on how to hide the CIA's role, and presented them to the world as the leaders of an authentic social movement in Nicaragua. This duplicity is now an embarrassment, albeit a mild one, to the *contra* movement. *Contra* supporters would say publicly that it does not reflect badly on the *contras'* good intentions today.

Having obtained a measure of legitimacy for the *contras*, Reagan pushed a reluctant Congress to commit itself publicly to them. He lobbied Congress hard to approve military aid. That campaign failed in 1984—Congress cut off military aid—and only partially succeeded in 1985 when Congress approved $27 million in humanitarian aid. The means for overcoming congressional opposition were twofold.

Privately, North was authorized by Reagan to undertake clandestine activities on behalf of the *contras*. As Robert Parry and Brian Barger recently reported in these pages, North went into action as early as the spring of 1984. (See "Reagan's Shadow CIA," November 24.) It is now clear that North's pro-*contra* activities were only one aspect of his many adventures beyond the reach of all democratic institutions.

Publicly, the administration attacked anyone who doubted its means. The most famous example of this was Pat Buchanan's speech last March saying that opponents of *contra* aid were objectively serving Soviet interests. Some denounced Buchanan for his crude McCarthyism, but his tactical sophistication is now evident. By early 1986 the administration's lobbying effort and the Sandinistas' repression had created widespread congressional sympathy for getting rid of the Sandinistas. What debate there was about the *contras* focused entirely on the administration's means of opposing the Sandinistas. By labeling all people with doubts about those means as near-traitors, Buchanan took aim at the last bastion of congressional opposition.

IN 1986, when Congress finally went along with Reagan on the *contra* issue, the administration's contempt for Congress did not lessen. It only deepened. North's operation, after all, was far larger than some stopgap procedure to support the *contras* until Congress could be made to see the error of its ways. Recall too that North diverted the funds from Iran several months *after* Congress had agreed to send $100 million in military aid to the *contras*. Congress's acquiescence was useful but not essential. There can be little doubt that the administration would have continued its lawless ways if North had not been caught.

Now that the administration has been caught, the *contras* and their supporters revert to the old script: "Such means are in our past," they say. "It is our ends that matter." This position is the opposite of the administration's position last March. Back then ends and means could not be considered separately. If you opposed the administration's means, then you were opposing its ends. A year ago it was near treason to reject the administration's means; today the *contras* and their supporters insist that they too reject such means themselves.

The repenting of the *contra* supporters is not the only thing that sounds familiar about this script: First, there were allegations that the left-wing opposition has been duped by the communists. Far right-wing military officers wield power behind the scenes. Then the national legislature goes into an uproar because its power has been usurped. A civilian figurehead president is ineffectual or compliant. There are Swiss bank accounts, forced resignations, even talk of coalition government. Whatever their means, the *contra* crusaders intended to export U.S.-style democracy to Central America. So far they have only imported Central American-style democracy to the United States.

JEFFERSON MORLEY

The real cause of the North affair.

DIVIDED SUPERPOWER

THE IRAN SCANDAL has set off a frantic search for causes. Even before the investigations begin, the suspects have been rounded up. First is character: a detached, out-of-touch president; a chief of staff afflicted with a deadly combination of arrogance and incompetence; a lieutenant colonel on a National Security Council staff convinced that his own ideas of the national interest (on the whole, correct ideas) transcend such constitutional niceties as respect for law and the will of Congress.

Then there is structure: a decentralized executive where so much is delegated that an entire foreign policy can be conducted in the White House without the president knowing; a rogue National Security staff become independent and operational when it was only intended to be deliberative and advisory; Cabinet officers so detached from a policy with which they disagree that they fail to raise a hand to constrain it.

All true. There is no doubt that the sentimental and anecdotal character of the president (which led him to bend national interest to the entreaties of hostage families)

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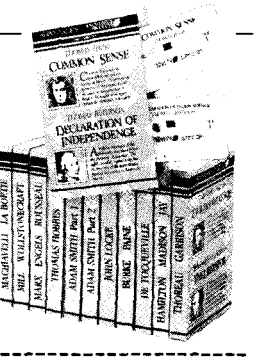

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and the looseness of his foreign policy apparatus had much to do with the origins and execution of this debacle. But these causes are insufficient. The current crisis is not unique to this president. Its origins transcend both the personalities of this administration and the peculiar way in which it runs foreign policy. This affair is not a Reagan crisis nor a presidential crisis, but a recurring American crisis, rooted ultimately in the tension between America's need to act like a great power and its unwillingness to do so. Into the breach between will and necessity have stepped people willing to violate the law. The result is disaster.

Watergate was paranoid, mean-spirited, and partisan in a way that the North affair is not. But ultimately it evolved out of the same contradiction: an administration, constrained by a divided polity from pursuing an intervention abroad, seeks surreptitious means to evade those constraints, and destroys itself trying to cover up the means. Watergate began when Nixon, trying to cover his secret actions in Cambodia and to prevent press leaks about the Vietnam War, turned matters over to his plumbers. In the current case, an administration prevented by a deeply divided Congress from funding the Nicaraguan *contras* used the Iranian arms deal to get around the law.

The United States has a vital interest in preventing the consolidation of a Soviet satellite in Central America. There are compelling moral reasons, too, for preventing Nicaragua from suffering the fate of Cuba. But the major point, and the major contradiction, is strategic. The United States has the responsibilities of a superpower, but not the national inclination to carry them out. In retrospect, it is the bipartisan internationalism of the first two postwar decades, and not the isolationism of the subsequent "Vietnam syndrome," that constitutes the historic aberration. America has reverted to its natural foreign policy instincts: a feeling of national moral superiority harnessed to a desire for isolated quiet. The result is a willingness to influence the world by example only.

LAST YEAR a French commando team was caught redhanded blowing up a Greenpeace ship in New Zealand. That pathetic little vessel was harassing French forces conducting nuclear tests in the South Pacific. One man died in the sinking. When the French cover story collapsed and the operation was revealed to be the work of the French secret service, there was a brief whiff of *scandale* in Paris. Brief. A few weeks of newspaper revelations. A principled resignation or two. There was even some halfhearted attempt by the French press to ask what President Mitterrand knew and when he knew it. And then . . . nothing. One got the distinct impression that the initial burst of muckracking enthusiasm was an exercise, perhaps an imitation of Watergate, that the French just could not pull off. They could not overcome the native feeling that France had important interests in the South Pacific, beside which all other considerations pale.

Compare the French reaction with the following. Two weeks into the Iran affair, Bob Woodward's lead story in the *Washington Post* revealed this: "The covert action authorized by Reagan's January 17 secret intelligence 'finding' "—the document authorizing arms sales to Iran—"allows the Central Intelligence Agency to interfere in the affairs of a foreign government." Goodness. In what business *is* the CIA, if not interfering in the affairs of foreign countries? Agriculture?

France is not exactly a model for constitutional emulation. National interests are not the only consideration. But they do count for something. Any country that deems it necessary *specially* to authorize its secret service to interfere in the affairs of other countries and that deems such authorization to be front-page news is going to find pursuing its interests abroad a distasteful and exceedingly difficult project.

No one doubts that American life would be happier and more prosperous (less defense spending) and less riven by division were we to be free of the responsibilities of leading the alliance of free nations. Who would not prefer that we adopt the foreign policy of 19th-century America or Switzerland today? But neutrals can enjoy the luxury of neutrality precisely because they can take shelter behind the protection of superpower. America did that for a century behind the British navy, as Switzerland now does behind the United States.

But American abhorrence of sordid realpolitik is nothing more than a sentimental anachronism. America can never again be a hemispheric Switzerland. As Walter Lippmann pointed out 35 years ago, the United States cannot even be 20th-century Britain or France. Unlike Europe, which could always rely on the reserves of the United States to come to its rescue, "we have to shape our policies with the knowledge that there are no strategic reserves upon which we could draw if our plans miscarried."

Congress is paralyzed by a faction—half the House—that acts as if the United States had unlimited reserves, some greater power to protect it from the consequences of its own irresponsible inaction. And that paralysis has produced the irresolvable contradiction between America's objective responsibilities and American will. The result—before North, after North—is crisis after crisis. Either the Executive accedes to congressionally mandated passivity, the result being a geopolitical crisis (the successive defeats of the late Carter years). Or the Executive tries to circumvent its constraints, the result being a constitutional crisis (the lawbreaking of the Nixon and now the Reagan administrations).

WHAT NORTH DID was wrong. One cannot sacrifice the rule of democracy in pursuit of even the most obvious and disinterested national objective. But until we resolve whether or not to accept the responsibilities of a superpower, we must expect more debacles of this sort.

The problem is not democracy. Democracy is instrumental. Its role is faithfully to transmit popular will. The problem is American popular will, which is deeply divided on whether to accept the responsibilities of a great power.

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(France, for example, is a democracy too, but its national consensus supports going to even the most cynical extremes to preserve France's status as a world power.) The result is that the presidency finds itself in the permanent bind: to fulfill its obligations as leader of a superpower or to fulfill its obligations as leader of a democracy. Confronted with the choice, a president must choose the latter. But it is the choice itself—not the identity of the president or his management style—that is the source of our recurring crisis.

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

THE INFANCY OF AGING

ALZHEIMER'S HUMOR is common these days. Most of us over 40 notice that our memory is not what it once was, and when we forget a name we joke nervously about the onset of senility while around us we observe a devastating and growing epidemic. Between one-and-a-half and three million Americans now have Alzheimer's. There is neither a cure nor an understanding of the cause. The jokes offer a thin cover for the justifiable fear that a lot of us are going to wind up in nursing homes with that terrible and permanent blank stare. The best estimates now are that the disease will strike seven percent of Americans over 65 and 25 percent of those over 85. If no cure or prevention is devised, the nursing homes will overflow as the baby boomers become grandparents.

In the past few weeks there have been three reports of research findings about Alzheimer's, all preliminary but important nonetheless. Dr. Peter Davies of Albert Einstein Medical College found a substance in the cerebral spinal fluid of Alzheimer's patients that may appear early in the disease and thus offer an accurate way of diagnosing it early. At present neurologists usually are not able to diagnose the disease until large amounts of brain tissue are already destroyed. But it is clear that Alzheimer's is a progressive disease that begins disrupting memory long before it is diagnosed. Many victims undergo the humiliation of failure in their careers and other parts of their lives for years before anyone recognizes that they have a debilitating disease. Early diagnosis could end some of that suffering, and relieve the anxiety of millions of older people who fear they are undergoing the first stages of Alzheimer's when they forget where they left their glasses.

During the annual meeting of the Society of Neuroscience in mid-November, two researchers from the National Institute of Mental Health read an unscheduled paper and called an instant press conference to announce they had found a gene that may be associated with Alzheimer's disease. Such a hasty presentation often indicates a concern more for scooping the competition than for advancing knowledge. Many research groups have been looking for Alzheimer's genes. There is good reason to believe that the disease is caused at least partly by hereditary factors. It can run in families, and victims of the genetic disease Down's syndrome almost always develop Alzheimer's disease in their 20s or 30s if they survive that long. If a gene or genes were discovered, they would be invaluable tools in the search for the cause and a cure.

The most curious of the three reports was a claim that a drug can lessen temporarily some of the memory loss and other symptoms of Alzheimer's. Dr. William Summers, a psychiatrist in private practice in Arcadia, California, published a paper describing significant improvement in 16 of 17 patients receiving an experimental drug known by its initials THA. Dr. Summers is not a member of the academic research establishment. He received no grants for his research, paying for most of it with his own money and with fees he charged the patients' families. That sort of independence is almost unheard of these days. When the results appeared, many academic and government scientists downplayed their importance to medical reporters, even though they were published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Because of that, the paper got relatively little attention. One of the objections was that researchers at the National Institute of Mental Health had tried THA a few years ago and noticed only slight improvement in the patients. Dr. Summers, an intense, sincere man, believed THA would work, and tinkered with the dose for years before achieving any success. Good results in 16 patients constitute no more than the first indication that a drug may work. But if further, larger trials of THA prove its effectiveness, this would not be the first time a major new brain drug was discovered outside the mental health research establishment. L-dopa, the principal treatment for Parkinson's disease, had a similar history.

THA's effects at their best do no more than allow the Alzheimer's patients to recognize their spouses or to stop soiling themselves. Such improvements should not be regarded lightly. They can make the crucial difference that keeps a patient out of a nursing home. But neither this drug nor any other under study now will allow patients to return to their previous lives. Nor will any known drug stop the deterioration of the brain that leads inevitably to death.

IT SEEMS as though the Alzheimer's epidemic appeared suddenly. Could it be that some 20th-century pollutant is destroying our brains in ways we don't yet understand? Scientists cannot discount some environmental factor as a cause of Alzheimer's disease. They have looked at several possibilities with inconclusive results. But the most common explanations for the apparent instant epidemic of Alzheimer's are that the population of older people is growing larger and doctors are now able to recognize a disease they often ignored before. This is only one drop in what has been a deep well of scientific and medical ignorance about aging and the problems of the elderly.

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"Thirty years ago, when I first became involved in the field of geriatrics," recalls Dr. Robert Butler, former head of the National Institute of Aging, now at Mt. Sinai Medical Center in New York, "it was simply taken for granted that if you live long enough you become senile—just inevitably with age. Second—this seems almost like a contradiction—it was probably all due to hardening of the arteries. And third was the idea that it was all untreatable."

Nowadays the vast majority of physicians and scientists do not regard senility as inevitable. The prevailing belief is that severe memory loss and confusion result from some specific condition. Occasionally this is caused by bad blood circulation to the brain, reaction to medications, or depression. But usually this condition is due to a disease affecting the brain itself, and Alzheimer's is by far the most common.

UP UNTIL the last few years a scientist who studied aging or the diseases of the aged stood far less of a chance of attaining glory or grants than his colleague embracing cancer research or molecular biology. As a result, the field attracted more than its share of charlatans, thus generating research that was often contradictory and confusing.

Dr. Butler believes that society's interest in the aged and their problems has passed through three stages. From the time of the Roman Empire to 1900 the average life span increased from about 25 to 50. There weren't too many old folks around, so those who survived into the later decades were venerated. In this century vastly improved sanitation and other methods of controlling infectious disease have lifted the average life span by another 25 years to 75 today. As that allowed more people to live longer, the younger members of society at first regarded the survivors as burdensome and boring. That was the situation for the past several decades. But now, as the sheer numbers of old people create true burdens on the entire society, the interest deepens and the money for aging research is just beginning to flow. In this fiscal year the federal government is spending about $50 million for research on Alzheimer's disease compared to more than a billion dollars for cancer research. Next year there will be slightly more because Congress, over the president's objections, added extra money. A few years ago there was almost no money for Alzheimer's research.

Solid research into aging can help us not only to contend with disease, but to answer a more fundamental question: What is normal? Given all our fears and observations of memory loss, what should we expect from the aging brain of a completely healthy individual? The answer has obvious and profound implications. Can we be certain, for example, that a 76-year-old brain is capable of carrying out the complex tasks required of the highest elective office in the country? Doctors examine the president's intestine and announce their findings to the world, but there is no accepted test of psychological function.

Studies of the normal aging process have been even more confused than research into diseases, but as with Alzheimer's some answers are beginning to emerge. We have all heard that the human brain loses 10,000 or some other number of neurons a day. There are no data to quantify precisely that number, but recent research leaves no doubt that in a healthy individual the brain does undergo a steady deterioration beginning at about age 25. Indeed, the degradation is so profound that we can wonder why the loss of memory and other mental capacities is not even greater than what we observe. CT scans show that with age the entire brain shrinks. On average the brain of a 70-year-old will be 11 percent smaller than that of a 40-year-old. The shrinkage is accompanied not just by loss of nerve cells in some brain regions, but also by the degradation of the parts of some neurons and a drop in the levels of some of the neurotransmitters, the chemicals that carry signals between cells.

Not surprisingly, when experimental psychologists carry out tests of mental function they find that on average, for most tasks, younger people do better. When asked, for example, to remember and read back lists of unrelated words, younger people have an easier time. A number of experiments show that the speed with which information is moved around inside the brain drops with age. On some tests the average 50-year-old is 30 percent lower than the average 40-year-old.

ONE OF THE major findings of experimental psychology is that an older person has the most difficulty grasping wholly new concepts. It is far easier for an older person to understand and remember something that builds on information he or she has already acquired. We have always heard that old people are "set in their ways," and these results would seem to prove that. The same type of experiments, however, reveal that the average older person can understand the same concepts as the average young person. It just takes more time and effort. This finding has led to the theory of "general resources," which holds that the brain has only a certain amount of energy to accomplish all its tasks and that as a person ages the amount of available energy decreases. But energy still can be diverted to carry out those tasks the person decides are the most important. It has also led some scientists to question the applicability of the experimental psychologists' findings to real life.

"Much of what we call loss of memory," says Dr. Butler, "may be a shift in strategy in which the so-called memory loss may really be a question of what's more important to me, and what am I going to invest myself in intellectually."

Other tests show that verbal IQ does not decline with age. Thus the building on past knowledge that leaves the elderly "set in their ways" can sound more derisive than it should. The aging person whose life has been rich in experience, confronted with a real-life problem, can draw on thousands, maybe millions of scenarios that offer far more insight than any solution provided by a younger person who considers the issue anew.

It is clear that the science of aging is in its infancy. We have enormous amounts to learn about the aging brain,

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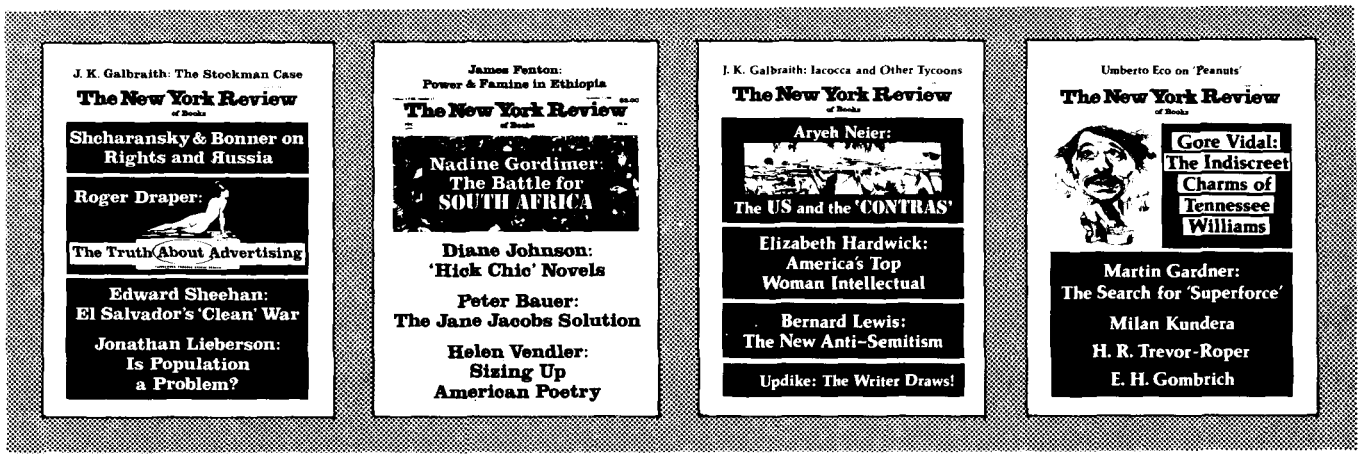
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both healthy and diseased. As for tests of the president's psychological competency, these have been proposed from time to time ever since Woodrow Wilson suffered his stroke, and the decision has always been that no available test surpasses the public's judgment. That will likely remain so for many years.

ROBERT BAZELL

Robert Bazell is the science correspondent for NBC News.

POSTCARD CAMBRIDGE

ANARCHY, STATE, AND RENT CONTROL

ROBERT NOZICK, a philosophy professor at Harvard, is the intellectual hero of libertarians. His book, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, winner of the National Book Award in 1974, argues that "free minds and free markets" are the key to a successful society. While endorsing personal choice on social issues like drugs and pornography, Nozick mocked the economic interventionism of contemporary liberals who, he said, are "willing to tolerate every kind of behavior except capitalistic acts between consenting adults." Alas, it now appears that like so many other advocates of the free market, Nozick is willing to make one small exception—himself.

In September 1983, Nozick signed a one-year lease on a condominium apartment in Cambridge, Massachusetts, owned by Eric Segal, the eminent classical scholar and author of *Love Story*. Segal, who bought the place in 1972, has lived there only occasionally and now resides in England. The apartment is a beauty, actually two combined units with 2,500 square feet of space, a wine "safe," Jacuzzi, sauna, and a 50-foot balcony overlooking the Charles River. As a consenting adult, Nozick agreed to pay Segal $1,900 a month.

When the lease came up for renewal a year later, Segal bumped the rent up to $2,400. A lot, but Cambridge is a hot real estate market and Nozick, as a consenting adult, signed again for another year. But he apparently was miffed. Cambridge, after all, has one of the nation's most draconic rent control ordinances—as do many college communities where students and junior professors have imposed economic regulations on the "townies" who rent them apartments during the school year. Was it possible, Nozick wondered, that Segal might be violating the law?

Less than a month later, Nozick showed up at the offices of the Cambridge Rent Control Board and asked if the city rent regulation applied to his apartment. "We told him it certainly did," said Bernard "Buddy" Packer, who makes sure all rents are fair and square in Cambridge. "The final, legal, maximum rent on that apartment should have been $1,900." And so the matter was settled, as far as Buddy Packer and the Rent Control Board were concerned. Nozick's rent was rolled back to $1,900. He received a $500 refund on his first month's rent.

But Nozick wasn't satisfied. Like the son of a missionary discovering pornography, Nozick apparently became fascinated with rent control. "I was up there showing the apartment to some brokers at one point," says Ken Edelman, a New York attorney who was soon representing Segal. "There was a copy of the Cambridge Rent Control Ordinance sitting on the coffee table."

Nozick decided the situation was more grave than even the rent control board had suspected. In Cambridge, rent increases are allowed only through occasional citywide raises, or through individual exceptions granted to petitioning landlords. But how was the *original* rent determined? The law says it is the rent at which the apartment was let when the ordinance first went into effect. Multifamily unit housing was regulated in 1970 and owner-occupied condominiums were brought under the law as of March 31, 1976. If an apartment was not being rented at the time, the first rent at which it was let becomes the base rent. All subsequent raises are figured by a complicated formula only the Cambridge Rent Control Board seems to understand.

Nozick knew he had not been the first tenant. Segal had rented out the apartment several times before to friends and acquaintances. After some investigating, Nozick turned up a couple in the building who house-sat the apartment for six months in 1976, without a lease, paying only $675 a month.

IN SEPTEMBER 1985, Nozick's second lease expired. Even though he had no contractual right to stay in Segal's apartment, he did not want to move out. The interventionist state to the rescue once again! Under Cambridge's rent control ordinance, even a tenant without a lease is evictable only if the owner himself wanted to move into the apartment. Not only did Nozick stay put, but a month later he filed suit against Segal in Cambridge District Court. Nozick argued the rent—based on the $675 base figure—should now be only about $800. He demanded a $25,000 refund for two years of "overpayment"—plus triple damages.

The case dragged on for two years. In May 1986 the Cambridge Rent Control Board issued a new ruling. Basing the rent on a 1977 lease where the tenant had paid $1,000, the board decided the final, legal, maximum rent should be $1,303. (Rent control boards always seem to choose mysterious figures in order to give themselves an air of authority. Segal's monthly maintenance, property tax, and mortgage costs were more than $2,000.)

This fall the parties settled out of court. Nozick agreed to move out of the apartment on September 15, and Segal agreed to pay his tenant $31,000. "We thought it was a pretty good settlement," said Edelman, Segal's attorney. "Cambridge's rent control ordinance is one of the strictest in the country. Nozick was in a very strong position."

Based on the $1,303 figure, however, the refund for the

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entire three-year "overcharge" should have been about $21,000. Why the extra $10,000? "Eric wants to sell the place," said Edelman. "With Nozick in there, the apartment was virtually unmarketable. Any new owner would inherit the problem. Basically, we had to pay off Nozick to get rid of him. Otherwise he might have been there forever."

Nozick refused all comment.

No one, not even a philosopher, is morally obligated to live as if the world were the way he wishes it were. Robert Nozick pays taxes and is entitled to enjoy the government benefits they finance—even benefits he thinks should not exist. Perhaps the libertarian philosopher should not be expected to opt out of rent control voluntarily. But should he be pursuing his landlord through the maze of rent control regulations like a man possessed? And should he be using his ability to make a nuisance of himself under these regulations for simple, if lawful, cash extortion?

They say that policemen make the best burglars. After a few years on the job, they know all the tricks. The same thing seems to be true of philosophers. If you're looking for someone to manipulate a rent control ordinance, find an advocate of the free market.

WILLIAM TUCKER

William Tucker is writing a book about rent control.

The Democrats get it together.

PARTY FLAVORS

TWO MEETINGS IN December will give some early indication of whether the resurgent Democrats are ready to reclaim their mantle as the general interest party of America's non-rich, or remain a squabbling collection of special pleaders. On December 10 through 12, the Democratic Leadership Council hosts a "New Directions for Democrats" conference in colonial Williamsburg, featuring all the stars of the party's center-right, as well as a few liberals. Meanwhile, also on December 10, at AFL-CIO headquarters on Washington's 16th Street, the labor leadership is meeting to consider its 1988 primary endorsement strategy.

The DLC was founded in early 1985 by former Virginia governor Chuck Robb, Senator Sam Nunn, and Representative Richard Gephardt. Governor Bruce Babbitt, Senators Joe Biden and Lawton Chiles, and Representative Bill Gray also soon took leadership positions. The DLC premise was that the brand of Great Society liberalism cum special interest politics personified by the Mondale candidacy was a disaster for the party generally, and a special catastrophe in the South and West, where Mondale was thought to have dragged down a lot of otherwise popular moderate local candidates. In North Carolina, even though Governor Jim Hunt was a well-known and respected moderate governor, Jesse Helms succeeded in painting him as Walter Mondale with a drawl.

The DLC also sought to be a conservative force on the question of party rules, emphasizing the role of elected leaders and party regulars, and de-emphasizing interest group politics in the convention process. The DLC has welcomed the idea of a mega-Tuesday Southern primary, which will force the entire field to tune its early message to a relatively conservative audience. And, needless to say, the DLC offered a congenial, common holding pen for several prospective centrist presidential candidates.

From its inception, the DLC made clear what it wasn't. Most emphatically, it wasn't big labor. It wasn't the organized civil rights movement; it wasn't feminist; it wasn't in favor of "big government"; and it certainly wasn't dovish on defense. In the DLC's well-orchestrated press effort, it has tried to identify centrism with new ideas. "Many leading Democrats, including some presidential aspirants, are reaching for new themes in economic and industrial policy that depart sharply from those that the party has stressed for decades," wrote the *New York Times*'s Peter Kilborn in a worshipful front-page story last August. "Most of the effort is concentrated within the Democratic Leadership Council. . . ."

But it is easy to overstate the DLC's association with new Democratic ideas. Several of the most substantive "new ideas" Democrats (Gary Hart and Michael Dukakis to name two) have chosen not to join because they view the DLC's intramural role as divisive. When the DLC tries to emphasize what it is for rather than what it is against, its themes are pretty much the same as everyone else's: get the country moving again; get tough about competitiveness and efficient on defense; emphasize work, not welfare, in social policy; build up education and infrastructure, and so on. These are, in my view, winning themes. And they don't require a distancing from the party past or a compulsive ritual of attack on the rest of the party base. But because the DLC was created as an anti-big labor, anti-faction faction, it can't seem to break the habit of flagellating the bad old Democratic Party (while Ronald Reagan keeps on appropriating its icons).

IN THE 1986 Senate sweep, the national Democrat label didn't hurt at all in the South and West. The candidates who ran strongest in the Southeast—Senators-elect Wyche Fowler of Georgia and and Terry Sanford of North Carolina—were, by Southern standards, liberals. Sanford began his North Carolina career as a backer of John Kennedy. He invented what today would be called industrial policy when he upgraded North Carolina schools as the bait for Research Triangle Park. Sanford's 1986 opponent tried to hound him as a big-spending national Democrat, and it didn't wash. Fowler is probably the most progressive senator from the Deep South since the young Claude Pepper (then known as "Red" Pepper). Both men, and their more conservative freshmen brethren—Senators-elect Bob Graham, John Breaux, and Richard Shelby—depended

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heavily on the votes of blacks and the money and organization of (guess who?) the labor movement.

So although the DLC people have a pretty good program, as tacticians they are already refighting the last war. In the name of weaning the party from faction politics, the DLC is in danger of becoming just another faction.

CURIOUSLY, THE AFL-CIO seems to be moving in the opposite direction. With the exception of Al Shanker of the teachers' union, labor leadership is not showing up at the DLC event. But the labor movement, whose endorsement of Mondale in 1984 soon became a kiss of the spider woman, feels pretty good about 1986. In a light turnout year, labor PAC money, labor phone banks, and labor get-out-the-vote drives played an important role in several Senate wins.

Were there an obvious candidate to endorse, AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland would repeat the primary endorsement strategy, used with such disastrous result in 1984. But unfortunately (or, in my view, fortunately) there is no candidate likely to command the two-thirds majority of the AFL-CIO council necessary under present rules for an all-labor endorsement. Ted Kennedy, labor's favorite, isn't running. New York governor Mario Cuomo, heir to the New Deal rhetorical tradition, looks good in direct proportion to your distance from Albany. He won election in 1982 with the strong support of New York's unions, and then decided he didn't really need them. His state program bears little resemblance to his national rhetoric. Cuomo might get a third of the council's vote, but not two-thirds. Hart is back on speaking terms with Kirkland and has sworn off 1984-style union bashing, but he is no labor favorite. None of the other candidates would necessarily welcome, let alone merit, a labor endorsement.

Hart has urged Kirkland to rate several candidates "Acceptable," in the manner of the Consumers Union, but to rate none of them a "Best Buy." The AFL-CIO's chieftains were initially cool to this approach, because it risks having individual unions in individual states endorse particular candidates, which would dilute labor's collective influence and leave the movement divided against itself. Worse, if unions bet on the wrong horse, labor would find itself with few convention delegates and with diminished influence in the platform debate and the many procedural issues to be decided at the convention. Obviously, what labor has to offer a candidate in the primaries is money and campaign workers, not moral support. To passively give a stamp of approval is to offer no negotiable currency.

Because the unions lack a candidate, they find themselves compelled to take a high road that they would be tempted to avoid if they could find a lower road. A plan being widely floated in labor circles would have the AFL-CIO buy television time, and invite all of the major candidates to compete for an "Acceptable" rating by submitting to questions about their positions on issues of interest to working people—not to union members, but to working people generally. This would have the immense advantage of positioning the labor movement as an ally of a broad progressive agenda, and not just of its own legislative goals. A multiple endorsement would also free friendly candidates from the onus of seeming to be labor's captive.

Under this procedure, labor would ask, for example: How do you propose to make American industry more competitive other than by lowering American workers' wages? What will you do to restore the right of workers to organize freely? What do you propose to do to help the two-income working family? What steps will you take to stop corporate raiders from raiding workers' pension funds? If the idea is to "accelerate transitions" from declining industries to emerging ones, how can this translate into decent jobs with good wages? What will you do to upgrade the quality and the salary level of jobs in the service sector generally? How will you turn environmentalism into a source of good jobs? What is your opportunity strategy (as opposed to an indentured servitude strategy) for people on welfare? If you believe in the new idea of flexible compensation, which would have workers share the risk of low profits, what will you do to give workers greater influence in management?

THIS LIST IS far better than demanding that a candidate pronounce himself on the several insider labor issues, such as domestic content legislation, textile protection, Davis-Bacon, and "double breasting" in construction contracting, all of which make labor indeed seem a narrow interest group, and serve to embarrass its friends. As one labor strategist observes, candidates who were good on the larger issues would be good on labor's more parochial issues anyway. And the process of thinking through the broader issues would help rehabilitate the labor movement in the eyes of the party and the country.

Tactically, labor would still be free to bargain with all "Acceptable" candidates for delegate slots. Individual unions might still decide to back a Cuomo here or a Biden there. But the labor movement as a whole would retain ties to all the viable progressive candidates, and to a broader public. If some candidate took off like a rocket in late 1987 or early 1988, the labor movement would still have the option of swinging support to him. The AFL-CIO may even audition and rate candidates of both parties, to remind Democrats not to take labor support for granted and to encourage Republican candidates to demonstrate at least nominal concern for wage-earners. All of this is a vast improvement on the disastrous strategy of 1984, which unintentionally induced all of Mondale's primary opponents to attack him by attacking the labor movement.

In short, the special interests in both the right wing and the left wing of the party have an emerging opportunity to appeal to a broad public interest. Labor should take the high road, and the DLC should stop bashing "interest groups." Indeed, if the DLC is not careful, it could wind up as the party special interest group, while the AFL-CIO seizes the general interest.

ROBERT KUTTNER

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Reagan's fragile legacy.

How To Save Democracies

By Morton Kondracke

ALMOST EVERY DAY, as Philippine defense minister Juan Ponce Enrile and his band of "Ramboys" maneuvered to rattle President Corazon Aquino and destabilize her government, the Reagan administration made it clear in public statements that it backed Aquino "without reservation." It did the same, even more pointedly, in private communications. Admiral Ronald Hays, commander of U.S. forces in the Pacific, visited Enrile and Chief of Staff Fidel Ramos in November to deliver the American message: no coups.

Admiral William Crowe, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who as Pacific commander three years ago was one of the first American officials to see that then-President Ferdinand Marcos was a disaster for American interests, backed up Hays's visit with a telephone call to Ramos expressing the U.S. government's pleasure at the Philippine military's newly acquired popular prestige and its respect for constitutional process. The Justice Department hinted that it had evidence of corruption by Enrile during the Marcos period. And Democratic Senator Sam Nunn, about to be chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, wrote to Enrile and Ramos to remind them of the importance the U.S. Congress attaches to the Philippine experiment in democracy. According to Richard Kessler of the Carnegie Endowment, a leading scholar on the Philippines who visited there during the crisis, "The U.S. conveyed the view at all levels, 'If there is a coup, this country will cut off all military and economic aid and get ready to exit our bases in 1991.' I don't know what more we could have done." No one is claiming that U.S. intervention alone was decisive, but the fact is that Ramos stuck with Aquino, Enrile got fired, and (as the United States also urged) Aquino moved to cleanse her Cabinet of alleged crooks, leftists and incompetents unacceptable to Ramos and other loyalist officers.

American behavior during Cory's latest crisis is evidence that at least one good and important thing has happened during the now-shaken Reagan presidency: a bipartisan consensus has developed that fostering democracy should be a central aim of American foreign policy. This idea certainly did not come naturally to the Reaganites. As heirs to the Alexander Hamilton tradition of rule by the haves, the Reaganites initially seemed to think that most Third World countries weren't ready for democracy. And more important, they thought that idealistically trying to set up democratic systems would interfere with the first business of American policy: fighting communism. So the Reagan administration began by tilting toward the military in Latin America, and the president himself stuck by Ferdinand Marcos virtually to the bitter end.

For the Democrats, heirs to the Jeffersonian tradition of popular rule, dedication to democracy came much more naturally. Still, the Carter administration never quite got around to making it the centerpiece of American policy. Its watchword was "human rights." Carter policy tended to consist of pressuring authoritarian regimes to make piecemeal reforms—"casework," one Republican calls it—rather than inspiring them to go the full distance to democracy. Human rights was controversial as a foreign policy priority even within the Carter administration. It got blamed for the fall of Iran and Nicaragua, and it wasn't always applied with equal force to left-wing regimes. Even so, it put the United States on the right side of history, and the Reaganites have advanced the cause in spite of themselves.

Part of this may be due to historical coincidence—for the Reaganites, pure luck. It seems that whatever cultural, political, and economic alchemy it takes to make people "ready" for democracy, the right brew has been bubbling up for the last decade or so in Iberia—Spain and Portugal—and also among her children in Latin America and the Philippines. (The Confucian cultures of Asia are farther behind, and the Moslems and Africans farther yet.) On Reagan's watch ten countries have moved out of dictatorship and toward democracy: Argentina (1983), Bolivia (1982), Brazil (1985), El Salvador (1984), Grenada (1983), Guatemala (1985), Haiti (1986), Honduras (1982), the Philippines (1986), and Uruguay (1984). The Reaganites like to claim that they established the strategic stability that allowed this movement to happen, and there may be something to that, especially in Central America. Argentine president Raúl Alfonsín gives credit to Jimmy Carter for helping his country go democratic, but even so the Reaganites have come to be proud of the general trend, and to want to sustain it.

Congress, especially the Democratic House, deserves credit for forcing the administration to switch from a policy of simple anti-communism to one of fostering democracy. Congress made clear it would not appropriate money for military aid to El Salvador with semiofficial death squads butchering 300 civilians a month; nor was it likely to support aid to the *contras* in Nicaragua. So, after some false starts (such as White House criticism of U.S. ambassador Deane Hinton for condemning the death squads in 1982), the administration sent Vice President Bush down to El Salvador in December 1983 to declare that "if these death squad murders continue, you will lose the support of the American people." Bush brought along a list of military commanders suspected of involvement in death squad ac-

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tivity; they were reassigned. In 1984 the Reagan administration more or less openly supported Christian Democrat Jose Napoleón Duarte for president against right-winger Roberto d'Aubuisson. Right-wing Senator Jesse Helms charges the administration also spent $2 million covertly to help Duarte get elected, which administration officials don't exactly deny. Is it moral for the United States to rig an election, even to establish democracy? It has to be better than either rigging one to thwart democracy or doing nothing and allowing a fascist to take power.

Credit for fostering democracy—in spite of President Reagan's personal predilections—also goes to a cadre of smart sub-Cabinet officials who perceived that democracy, not right-wing authoritarianism, was the only dependable long-term antidote to communism. They include Elliott Abrams, former assistant secretary of state for human rights and now for Latin America; Michael Armacost, undersecretary of state for political affairs; Paul Wolfowitz, former assistant secretary of state for Asia; Morton Abramowitz, the State Department's intelligence chief; Richard Armitage, assistant secretary of defense; Stephen Bosworth, U.S. ambassador to the Philippines; the late Donald Fortier, former No. 2 man on the National Security Council; and Admiral Crowe.

Although Reagan saw Marcos—as he said during his second TV debate with Walter Mondale in 1984—as the only alternative to a Communist takeover of the Philippines, his bureaucrats worked to fashion another choice. They promoted fair elections, suspecting that Marcos would lose. They encouraged formation of a U.S. observer team to monitor the vote and expose Marcos's election fraud. They cheered on Representative Stephen Solarz's investigations of Marcos's financial corruption, and some of them backed Solarz's threat to cut off military aid to the Marcos regime. When Marcos threatened military action to keep himself in power and Ramos and Enrile turned against him to back Aquino, U.S. bases in the Philippines allowed rebel helicopters to land and refuel. In the end, Reagan's subordinates got him to back Aquino too. Knowing his penchant for personalizing policy, they made sure Aquino visited Washington six months ahead of schedule, to seal Reagan's blessing.

UNFORTUNATELY, the Reagan administration lacks a comprehensive strategy for helping fragile new democracies stay democratic. "The truth is, we're doing it ad hoc and country-by-country," said one member of the sub-Cabinet cabal. Still, from various speeches by administration officials and from interviews, it's possible to make up a list of Reagan rules for helping fledgling democracies. Some of them work, but there is no reason to be comfortable that democracy is secure.

Rule 1: Speak Up. The administration statements of support for Aquino fall under this category. When President Reagan went to Latin America in 1982, he visited only democracies. The presidents of ten new democracies have visited Reagan here in the last year; the rulers of Paraguay, Chile, and Panama have not. At the United Nations, Secretary of State George Shultz meets with foreign ministers of Latin democracies, but not dictatorships.

Rule 2: No Coups. "In country after country," one top official said, "the U.S. ambassador tells the military, and our military tells their military, 'If you stage a coup, the U.S. will not support you and will cut you off without a penny.' " At the same time, the administration has resumed or increased aid to the military in several new democracies, especially to those in Central America and to the Philippines. It is working to reform the military to make it better at fighting Communist insurgents and less inclined to abuse civilians. During Reagan's tenure there have been no military coups against new democracies. In El Salvador violent killings of civilians are down from a peak of 600 persons a month to 30, according to the U.S. Embassy; in Guatemala, from more than 300 a month to 30, and in the Philippines, "salvagings" also are down. Most encouraging of all, a new breed of professional soldier may be emerging—on the model of Ramos in the Philippines, Defense Minister Eugenio Vides Casanova in El Salvador, and former Defense Minister Oscar Mejia Victores in Guatemala—that believes the job of the military is to protect civilian rule.

The unfortunate corollary of the "no coups" rule is that in the name of establishing military-civilian cooperation, the administration apologizes for—and in effect encourages—the failure of new regimes to punish officers responsible for atrocities and other crimes. Asked about this pattern in El Salvador, one State Department official said, "Except in Argentina, where the military was disgraced by losing a war, there's not a single Latin country where an officer has been brought to trial. It was a milestone when some enlisted men were convicted for the nuns' murders in El Salvador. Punishing officers is yet to come. But do you think we are going to force this to happen in El Salvador, where there's a Communist insurgency to be fought, when it's not happened in Brazil?" This failure is being seized upon by administration critics to prove that El Salvador is no democracy and the Reaganites aren't really democrats. Ultimately, Duarte-bashing is designed to undercut all of Reagan Central American policy—especially aid to the *contras*. But Duarte is better than d'Aubuisson, the administration is more democratic than it was in 1981, and if the *contras* ever do beat the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, no American administration can afford to let them behave like cutthroat Somocistas.

Rule 3: Send Money. The inability of military regimes to cope with economic distress may have helped launch many of the new democracies. A new theory is making the rounds that democracies, creating a sense of mass participation in a nation's joys and woes, may be more resilient than dictatorships in coping with the current debt crisis. But it seems unlikely that democracy can survive forever under the pressure of rising populations, lagging growth, falling income per capita, and mounting debt. The Reagan administration *has* sent increased foreign aid to many of the new democracies. Economic aid to Central America (not counting Nicaragua) amounted to $186 million in 1980; last year it was $886 million, and military aid amounted to another $226 million. Aid to the Philippines is up from $239 million in fiscal 1985 to $440 million in 1986. But next year the

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Gramm-Rudman law will halt aid increases to most countries (though not the Philippines, thanks to the $200 million gift the House forced the administration to give Aquino).

Meanwhile other economic promises by the Reagan administration—notably the Caribbean Basin Initiative and the Baker Plan for debt restructuring—have proved to be largely empty. The guts of CBI was to have been freer access to U.S. markets; in fact, imports from CBI countries declined by 23 percent during the first two years of the program, thanks to U.S. protectionism. The Baker Plan was to promote increased lending by commercial banks and the International Monetary Fund to 15 major world debtors if they agreed to make structural adjustments toward more market-oriented economies. Only Mexico is likely to get major new funding in 1986; a plan for the Philippines is in negotiation. At best, though, the Baker Plan will only load more debt onto the debtor countries. In 1986 private lenders will receive $27 billion more in interest from the Baker 15 countries than they provide in new lending. Despite falling interest rates and increased exports, debt service requirements mean that Latin America will undergo a net loss of $30 billion in resources this year, money that can't be spent to provide new opportunities for exploding populations.

NO ONE can say for sure what debt-forced austerity will do to fragile democracies, but it's hard to see how it can help them. It seems at least possible that debtor countries will produce as leaders a breed of nationalistic populists who will promise jobs and renounce foreign debt without instituting free market reforms. That is a formula for Peronism, not democracy, but the Reagan administration does not seem to have an answer for the problem. Senator Bill Bradley at least has an idea—a reduction of debt burdens for countries willing to reform. Since the banks are unlikely ever to get their loans repaid anyway, Bradley's plan would seem a useful way for the United States to seize the initiative. If the reeling Reagan administration is looking for a way to give meaning to its remaining two years, it could do worse than to adopt Bradley's idea as a way of doing something realistic for democracies.

Rule 4: Build Institutions. In a thrilling speech to the British Parliament in 1982 (largely written by career diplomat Mark Palmer, currently ambassador to Hungary), President Reagan launched what's become the National Endowment for Democracy, a government-financed foundation that aids labor unions, newspapers, political parties, women's groups, and civic organizations in fledgling democracies and some dictatorships. According to NED's president, Carl Gershman, "The tendency in these countries is for the government to be strong, the opposition to be revolutionary, and the center to be passive. You can't go in and say, 'The United States is going to change your system,' but you can help grass-roots organizations develop. If we do it right, there will be organizations in many countries that have a sense of democratic solidarity. And if the United States has been working with them for years, they will think well of us, instead of getting acquainted when they suddenly come to power."

NED helped fund democratic poll-watching during the Philippine elections in February. In 1985 it started Haiti's first democratic study center, which in the post-Duvalier period has become a locus of organizing for that country's first free elections. It is helping the Democratic Alliance in Chile teach all the non-Communist opposition parties how to organize. It's backing Consciencia, a democratic women's group in Argentina that hopes to develop sister organizations throughout Latin America. In Peru it is funding an organization working to deregulate the economy to legalize the so-called "informal sector," the non-taxed underground economy. And in Paraguay NED just funded a first-ever business-labor conference to discuss democratic development. It and its partner institutes from the Democratic and Republican parties, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the AFL-CIO have other novel projects going in Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe.

The problem is that though there are hundreds of millions of dollars worth of meritorious democracy-building projects to undertake in the world (sample: re-registering Philippine voters for the constitutional plebiscite in February and congressional elections in May), NED's budget is only $15 million annually, and that has to be fought for every year in Congress. NED survived the latest attempt to kill it in the Senate by the lopsided vote of 79-19 in September, but the Reagan White House was nowhere to be found during the fight. "Having launched it," a NED board member said, "I think Reagan's forgotten it." If the White House is looking for initiatives, it might rediscover its own child.

Finally, Rule 5: Fight Communism. For the Reagan administration, this probably remains Job 2 (right after the top priority, saving the presidency). But a strong bipartisan agreement has formed around the need to combat the Communist insurgency in the Philippines, and a fragile consensus had formed around the idea that aiding the *contras* was needed to preserve democracy in Central America. The administration evidences some division about Aquino's recent ceasefire with the Communists. Some officials think it's a potentially useful tactic to buy time for the military to get its counterinsurgency strategy fully organized; others fear that the Communists will use the respite to regroup. It seems inevitable that eventually there will be a showdown between the hard core of the New Peoples Army and the reformed Philippine Army.

AS LONG AS Aquino is president, the Philippines will have united American support. But the *contra* operation is enmeshed in Reagan's Iran scandal and is threatened with possible de-funding by Congress. The danger is that if the *contras* are cut off, the Sandinistas will be free to spread subversion among their neighbors, respect for U.S. tenacity will evaporate, and our ability to support democrats and influence frightened military leaders will collapse. The United States is going to have enough trouble protecting democracy against debt. We shouldn't add to the danger by creating doubts about our dedication to our own system. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Passions

Different kinds of love have different risks, and one of the riskiest is a filmmaker's love for a novel. For one thing, he may start by convincing himself that there's a film in the novel and may end by trying to make a film out of his love for the book, rather than out of the book itself. For another, he may think, because the book is so vivid in his mind,

The Mosquito Coast
(Warner Brothers)

that he is transposing it more successfully than in proof he is.

The Mosquito Coast is a case in point—both points. Point One: apparently the producer Jerome Hellman (who did *Midnight Cowboy* and *Coming Home*) believed that the action in Paul Theroux's novel would support a two-hour film just because it gripped him as a reader. But the grip of one art can be, often is, very different from what's needed in another. The novel's action is narrative, a succession of incidents, some of which are dramatic—quite a different animal from a drama. Paul Schrader was asked to write the screenplay because, I'd guess, he is versed in action (*The Yakuza*, *Raging Bull*) and also because, relevantly, he is interested in spiritual struggle. (He has written a book on transcendental films; his screenplay for *Taxi Driver* was modeled on Bresson.) Theroux's novel is an adventure, both physical and interior, a story ultimately of scale. A man, mighty in mind and courage, goes up against the universe one-on-one and learns that mortality is no match for eternity. Yet he does not admit defeat even when he is defeated; thus he certifies the necessity for man in the cosmos. Georg Lukács said, "Men are but pawns. . . . Man's significance consists only of this, that the game cannot be played without him." Basically, in its rather too-tidy way, Theroux's book deals with this idea, and basically Schrader tries to do the same in his adaptation. The best to be said about the result is that we can recognize the effort.

Then came Peter Weir, the Australian director, and Harrison Ford, the American actor, who had worked together on the thriller *Witness*, in which Weir distinguished himself and Ford was competent. Both had experience with large-action films: Weir did *Gallipoli* and *The Year of Living Dangerously*, Ford was Indiana Jones. But Weir's chief contribution to this film, set mainly in South America, is to remind us of two Werner Herzog films, *Aguirre* and *Fitzcarraldo*, and Ford, though he keeps pumping, isn't deep or rich enough to support the entire picture. His role *is* the film: almost all the other characters merely attend him; and Ford's figurative shoulders just aren't broad enough.

Allie Fox (Ford) is an inventor who, disgusted by various corruptions in America, takes his wife and four children to a backward South American country. On the ship they meet a missionary with whom Allie contends, quoting the Bible as he maintains his independence of religion. In Mosquitia, Allie buys a town, then travels upriver with his brood to find that the town is a few shacks on a jungly bank. To indomitable Allie this is a welcome challenge. With his inventiveness and relentless energy, he organizes family and local folk to raze the hovels and build a new settlement, complete with an ice plant. (We accept the possibility of all this because it comes from an accepted novel.)

Just when we are wondering whether Allie will meet any real obstacle in life, Three Bad Men appear in the new Eden and eventually cause its destruction. Allie leaves with his family because the ice plant's ruin has poisoned the river (no word of worry about the locals left behind), and after another attempt to settle on the seacoast, the family comes upon the missionary's cozy settlement, complete with church. The meeting brings about Allie's catastrophe at the hands of God's agent.

Point Two (from above): Hellman, Weir, and Schrader, because the whole book was in their minds, didn't realize that they were giving us only its silhouette, proportionate but unrealized. Distillation is of course always needed for the film of a novel, but some novels distill better than others. Theroux's book lives as much by its texture as by its story. The film is only a synopsis. Those viewers who don't know the book may wonder at the sketchiness, and those who do know it may feel that it has rushed past them. The filmmakers were fleshing out the film with their knowledge of the book.

One small proof: throughout the picture we hear voice-over narration by Allie's oldest child, a boy of about ten. (He is the narrator of the book, too, but there he obviously is recalling the past when he is older.) Much of what this boy says was incomprehensible to me, but Weir and others knew the lines so well that they thought the boy was clear.

Book Note. "This is a deeply serious, thoroughly researched, very thoughtful work. . . . No one could read this book without respect for Gado's scrupulousness, commitment, and empathy." These are excerpts from a report I wrote for a publisher in 1980. The manuscript was (or is now called) *The Passion of Ingmar Bergman* by Frank Gado, and it has

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The Color of Money. With a stronger script, this sequel to *The Hustler* could have been a sound film. But it does have Paul Newman; and Martin Scorsese directs in fine, dark style. (Reviewed 11/17/86)

Half Life. Dennis O'Rourke's simple, strong documentary about the Marshall Islanders who survived—and didn't survive—the U.S. testing of an H-bomb in 1955. (12/15/86)

Marlene. Present-day Dietrich refused to appear, but her now-baritone voice wonderfully holds together this flavorful documentary of her career. (12/8/86)

Sid and Nancy. Those who care little for punk rock (like me) may be held (like me) by the stark treatment of Sid Vicious and his girl, their lives and deaths. (10/27/86)

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been belatedly and most deservedly published—by another publisher, Duke University Press (547 pp., $45, $16.95 paper). Gado has updated it to include subsequent Bergman work and, as far as I can recall, has emended and expanded the original.

The book is unique: to my knowledge it's the first to treat a filmmaker almost exclusively as a writer. Gado gives his reasons for this choice:

> Although a play is predicated upon its performance (even if its stage is only the reader's mind), it also exists as a literary entity apart from its interpretation in any particular enactment. . . . The focus of this study . . . is not on Bergman as director or even on the cinematic aspect of his films; rather it is on the imagination expressed through his extensive dreamwork of fictions spanning five decades.

Thus he includes discussions of Bergman's prose fiction and theater plays. Thus, too, though this is not a biography, he includes much biographical material, certifying that "Bergman's films witness his conception of himself as a writer." Through the life and the works, Gado traces and articulates persuasively some psychological themes, especially Oedipal ones, culminating in his discussion of *Fanny and Alexander*.

Yet Gado is free of the slave collar of doctrine, psychological or critical. He *responds* to each work—with impressive knowledge and insistent openness. He illuminates and connects—and inevitably sometimes widens the reader's eyes. (He calls *A Passion* the "product of an exhausted imagination." But at least he argues his case lucidly.) Most film books fall into one of two groups: capricious subjectivity or die-stamp theory. Gado's book is free of predestining theory, and its personal qualities command our regard.

TELEVISION

PRIME TIME CEREAL

Perhaps you saw him, the man built like a tree trunk delivering the cold, hard facts about breakfast cereal. "I'm only 35," he announced, with an unfriendly stare that smacked of defiance. So when he learned about the possible link between bran eating and cancer prevention, he "didn't exactly jump." Then he thought about All-Bran. He reasoned that the bran itself might be a smart buy. And when he "found out I could get apples and raisins in the bargain," that clinched it. His breakfast deal was made.

Breakfast, we have lately been learning, is the meal at which today's tough customers test their mettle. It's the proving ground, the crucible, the occasion for finding out whether they are indeed good enough for Grape Nuts. It's the hour that finds John Denver welcoming you to his morning in a mountain setting (is this his backyard, or a national park?), offering a bowl of Raisin Bran as big as all outdoors. It's the time when a lone, handsome male in pajama bottoms, showing off a finely tuned torso, wakes up at his weekend house to savor the solitary benefits of "an honest, nutty crunch." The emphasis is on pure, healthful, no-frills nutrition, ingested by people whose only interest is in doing what's best. Of course, the underlying idea is that they would much rather be eating Kix.

In case there's any doubt as to just whom these messages target, consider the case of Eric and Alice, for whom a breakfast cereal plays Cupid. Alice arrives at Eric's one morning, wearing a business suit, tiny necktie, and (we can't see them but we know they're there) running shoes. She chides Eric, in a bashful tone she probably never uses in the boardroom, about his eating habits. He's 43 years old, Alice says, and he's still eating cold pizza for breakfast. Eric hangs his head. Alice offers him a box of cereal and scuttles off to work. "Does this mean you . . . love me?" Eric asks, cued by "Dedicated to the One I Love," which is the cereal's theme song. Believe it or not, it does.

Not everyone in the new generation of breakfast-eaters is as easygoing as this; the majority are a good deal more demanding. There is the young woman on the boat, for instance, whose male companion makes the mistake of offering her some coffee. Not so fast, she warns him; she's not about to drink a whole cup of *anything* until they make a coffee that meets her exacting standards.

The aggressiveness of such tactics may be novel, but the focus on breakfast is not: breakfast, in the minds of America's advertisers as well as its nutritionists, has always been the day's most important meal. In terms of energy, ambition, fastidiousness, and even class distinctions, it sets a certain standard. This goes back to the days, in the 1920s and 1930s, when sauerkraut and Parkelp (containing "natural minerals from the sea") were being marketed as plausible alternatives to cereal, and when cereal was itself being put forth as a remedy for the constipation that might make workers too weary to do their jobs well. *Fit for America*, Harvey Green's fascinating compendium of health- and nutrition-related minutiae, reveals that in 1927 a Post's Bran Flakes advertisement depicted a woman who "*could* be beautiful" but was "never quite up to par" because of "lack of natural bulk." And All-Bran that same year was taking "a somewhat menacing tone, emblematic of the fears of failure that were steadily increasing among white-collar workers in the 1920s."

"From the outset," Green points out,

> the primary targets for advertisers of breakfast cereals and other health foods were the middle class and the elite. It was a safe and shrewd maneuver, since the working class often shared the same success aspirations implicit in the litany of advertisements warning of the failure of advance because of being "worn out."

So, in a sense, not much has really changed. But today's hardball, upscale sales approach is a far cry from such obvious scare tactics, let alone from the joyful lip smacking that used to sell cereal a mere decade ago, or the simple promises of early-morning wakefulness that made coffee so appealing. This new breed of commercials is geared to a truly different state of mind. For the overachieving young ascetics at whom the new breakfast pitch is aimed, the enjoyment of breakfast qua breakfast would be unthinkable. What is being sold isn't health, well-being, or pleasure. It's power, the kind that comes from hard work and rigorous discipline and, yes, from eating bran. It's the power to emerge from the cave trim and fit and fully in command, ready to leap full-blast into the business day.

That, of course, is the reason these serious new cereals are aimed so emphatically at this particular crowd. For them,

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breakfast is the make-or-break meal, all that talk about restaurants-as-nightlife notwithstanding. If the dinner hour is for relaxing, there's no point in pitching it to these people, for whom rest is anathema. What can you sell them at dinnertime except some tasteless, listless variant on Lean Cuisine? (Though for advertising acumen and snob appeal, there's no beating the frozen dinner touted as "Perhaps the only ten-minute dinner that goes with ten-year-old wine.")

BREAKFAST surely does set a tone for one's day. Skipping breakfast suggests indifference, or a dangerous inability to treat one's body as the superb, well-cared-for instrument one knows it to be. Too much breakfast, on the other hand, falls within the purview of fat, lazy souls without worlds to conquer (unless they've already conquered them). Ditto Pop-Tarts, or any other such habits a newly solemn executive type would like to forget. For such a corporate hopeful, the only proper breakfast route is the life-preserving, cancer-daunting, palate-numbing route of bran.

Of course, one is free to eat what one likes, but the underlying elitism and fussiness in these messages is a lot more disturbing than the questionable 1904 claim that Shredded Wheat "can be prepared in over 250 different ways." More often than not, the early morning gourmet is depicted in solitude, actually looking a little peevish if someone else wanders onto the same trail. There is a superior, proprietary quality to these people, even in the great outdoors. Although the notion of prosperity is never made explicit, it can't help but come to mind with the image of someone who's apparently master of all he surveys. Eating right is presented not simply as healthful or preventative, but also as a means of separating oneself from the workaday hordes.

And the high epicurean standards suggested by these messages seem particularly absurd when applied to products that nobody has the temerity to call tasty. The idea seems to be that an up-and-coming young somebody should always think twice about what is ingested, not only to avoid the risk of strychnine, but to make sure that this food actually deserves his or her high-caliber attention. In times gone by, it was the diner who supposedly cried "Mm-mm-good!" over a nice bowl of Campbell's. Nowadays, it's the soup that can consider itself lucky if a fast-moving young executive deigns to dig in.

The people who plot these cereal strategies know a thing or two about insecurities. They know that most back yards probably don't look anything like Yosemite, and that even if they did, few of us would ever stagger out there any sooner than was absolutely necessary. They know that some backsliders are in fact asleep as the dawn breaks, and may head for work without a single nutritious molecule anywhere in their digestive tracts. They are aware that the attitudes being advanced in these advertisements, aside from being selfish, snobbish, and anhedonic, are also largely unattainable. And they know that while at any other time such qualities would hardly seem attractive, at this moment ruthlessness is widely perceived as a virtue. But they don't always take recidivism into account. To be sure, there's a lot to be said for purity and discipline, for rising with the birds to meet a nutritional challenge. But there's also something to be said for sleeping late. And for Cheerios.

JANET MASLIN

Janet Maslin is a film critic for the *New York Times*.

The decline of British conservatism.

THATCHER'S FELLOW TRAVELERS

BY ANDREW SULLIVAN

I.

"THATCHERISM" was a long time coming in British politics. When Philip Larkin wrote of England in 1972 that it was

> First slum of Europe: a role
> It won't be so hard to win,
> With a cast of crooks and tarts

his sentiments were not merely his own. And when he wrote three years earlier of the withdrawal from empire as something ominous for England's sense of herself—

> The statues will be standing in the same
> Tree-muffled squares, and look nearly the same.
> Our children will not know it's a different country.
> All we can hope to leave them now is money

—he was articulating more than just a personal prejudice.

Larkin's conservative voice, questioning at the deepest level the values of the postwar Keynesian state, was a soft echo of Jimmy Porter's in Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, of Kingsley Amis's sharp evocation of the affluent academic elite in *Lucky Jim*. It represented not the establishment conservatism of the public school social-democratic consensus, but a more aggressive, demagogic populism that refused to be at peace with the collapse of what England used to mean and the paltriness of what England had come to be. It is one of the most significant ironies of postwar British cultural history that those so-called radical "angry young men" of the 1950s—most particularly Amis, Osborne, and the late John Braine—became avid social and political conservatives of a Thatcherite bent. Amis is on the editorial board of *Policy Review*, Osborne writes articles against new liturgy in the Church of England, and Braine, in his last years, was in favor of bringing back capital punishment.

But it is no accident. "Thatcherism," the only "ism" ever to be attached to the name of a British prime minister, deliberately represented much more than a marginal shift of policy direction. Of course, it is still possible to construct a history of its meanderings without any reference to ideology. Monetarism had been discovered by James Callaghan's Labour government in 1976. Union reform was already in the political bloodstream by 1979, and had originally been

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attempted by Harold Wilson's Labour government ten years earlier. The high exchange rate and interest rate combination in the early 1980s had as much to do with the impact of North Sea oil on sterling as with any ideological conviction. The restructuring of British industry, as well as the political ability to survive high levels of unemployment, had been begun under Callaghan, as had the preparation for the siting of American cruise missiles. It is possible, in other words, to argue plausibly that all the key elements of "Thatcherism" were a natural development of the 1970s, in the same way that Ronald Reagan can be seen as a logical extension of Jimmy Carter's final year.

And yet such an analysis misses something essential. Thatcherism was not bent upon the excoriation of a previous administration alone. Whatever its particular policies, the rhetoric of Thatcherism was rooted in a long-heralded desire for a moral and intellectual attack upon an entire generation. Just as the 1945 revolution of the left had its "guilty men," so did the counterrevolution of 30 years later. (The size of Thatcher's 1983 landslide was matched in the postwar period only by Attlee's.) The guilty were those who in the name of liberalism and socialism had undermined Britain's economic, strategic, and cultural strength. They were responsible not for a temporary "malaise" but for a deeply seated, maybe terminal, illness: the decline of Britain.

Yet seven years after Thatcherism's initial coming to power, an irony is clear: the Britain that it was supposed to "bring back" was even more illusory and confused than Reagan's forever dawn-breaking America. It was a Britain framed upon emotional conceptions of previous glory that had no prospect of return, upon a moral and cultural coherence that was diminishing with every day that passed. Oddly enough, the disappearance of such coherence intensified, rather than dissipated, the longing for it. And such longing went deeper than temporary dissatisfaction with liberalism: it evoked sentiments that had at their core an almost premodern rejection of the liberal state.

"Do you hate liberalism with all your being?" is how one leading Tory thinker put it when discussing his ideas with me earlier this year. He was more evocative of one side of Thatcherism than any free marketeer. So perhaps are the sentiments of Peregrine Worsthorne, the editor of the London *Sunday Telegraph*, writing in his paper only last month. For him, almost all aspects of contemporary liberal England are disgusting. Britain, for him, is now "more cause for shame than for pride. . . . The territory is changed out of all recognition. . . . Punks make me sick and *Guardian* women are another source of intense disgust." He referred to the Falklands War as the only thing worth celebrating in recent British history. It was a particularly revealing remark, because it showed the extent to which the war was not simply an extraneous episode that somehow saved Thatcher, as most interpretations have it, but rather the essence of Thatcherism itself. The emotions that the war unleashed—of nation, of history, of meaningful community—helped Thatcher because they revived a kind of distillation of her appeal. They tapped its core again. The extraordinary scene upon the return of the fleet after the Falklands War, when sailors pinned anti-strike slogans to their ships in front of thousands of flag-waving, Britannia-singing workers, captured some of the irony: it demonstrated the extent to which Thatcherism's "new beginning" was, in effect, an attempt to resurrect a particular vision of England's past.

Sexual Desire: A Moral Philosophy of the Erotic
by Roger Scruton
(The Free Press, 428 pp., $25)

Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England Volume II: Assaults
by Maurice Cowling
(Cambridge University Press, 375 pp., $49.50)

The Church in Crisis
by Charles Moore, A. N. Wilson, and Gavin Stamp
(Hodder and Stoughton, 224 pp., £6.95)

Brideshead Benighted
by Auberon Waugh
(Little, Brown, 221 pp., $16.95)

Experience and Its Modes
by Michael Oakeshott
(Cambridge University Press, 368 pp., $44.50, $14.95 paper)

The real paradox, however, is that the other part of the appeal—the actual policies of the Thatcher government—seemed to point distinctively to the future: a freer market, deregulation, the extension of private ownership, reliance on monetary control of inflation were all aspects of British policy well before they became the norm for other Western economies. In 1981, economists talked of the "British experiment" as though it represented something new. But more importantly, it emanated from a fundamentally modern and liberal conception of the limited state.

The way in which the two strains were combined drew heavily on a previous political incarnation. In the late 1960s, Enoch Powell's combination of a populist, libertarian attack on the planned economy and a rallying call to defend the purity of the "nation" (largely directed against foreign immigrants) had become a phenomenal, and largely extraparliamentary, political force. Thatcherism was its most tenacious offspring. But Powell's discovery—that by linking Liberal free market economics with a revived Conservative nationalism a new coalition could be constructed—was a crucially flawed one. In opposition, it could rally a whole plethora of laissez-faire liberals, old-style Tories, working-class capitalists, and intellectual conservatives without any worry. But in office, the contradictions have begun to come home.

While in the United States the conservative tradition has had a long-standing alliance with the forces of the market, in Britain conservatism was largely shaped by the counterattack against individualist liberalism. The American conflict between social conservatives and economic liberals might be seen, then, as an awkward family quarrel to be solved by inertia. In Britain, however, this kind of conflict was tantamount to a mental breakdown. The policies that the economists had designed to "bring Britain back" were precisely those liberalizing, equalizing forces that, according to the moralists, had taken her away in the first place. Deregulating markets actually led to a further round of the environmental spoliation, materialism, and selfishness that the more radical conservative moralists found only mildly less repulsive than socialist controls.

In other words, as Thatcher's economic liberalism succeeded, her emotional and political coalition began to unravel. Those heirs of Larkin and Osborne, the new polemicists of the "conservative" revival, began to distance themselves quite deliberately from their erstwhile mistress. The strains within the conservative alliance—between the essentially anti-modern conservatives and the more liberalized economists—became apparent. And now that the full consequences of a freer and more capitalist—even classless—Britain have begun to come

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closer, the conservative acolytes who did so much to articulate the philosophy of "revolution" have predictably become that recurring feature of political life: fellow travelers.

II.

ONE OF THE most prominent, if not one of the most disloyal, of these is Roger Scruton, whose adherence to Thatcherism has been aided by his love of the publicity it gives him. It is Scruton who first leaked the existence of a conservative philosophy group that meets in a private house and informally advises the prime minister. It is Scruton who is the guiding force behind the *Salisbury Review*, a magazine started in 1982 as a new forum for a conservative intellectual revival. Without Thatcher, of course, such a journal would seem almost absurd; and yet its project, the enunciation of a conservatism equally opposed to liberalism and to socialism, is far more of a threat to her political project than a help.

Scruton's public posture hardly emphasizes this ambiguity. It is a posture of being on the cutting edge, politically and intellectually, of a beleaguered conservative revival. It is helped by—indeed revels in—a sense of isolation, and at times it treads a precarious line between argument and polemic. But the persecuted minority complex is the core of the *Salisbury Review*. As an April editorial put it:

> This publication which nobody reads is perhaps more widely known in the United Kingdom than any other intellectual journal, and certainly more widely vilified. The explanation for this peculiar state of affairs is simple: the *Review* is written for the most part by people within the universities and polytechnics who, despite being young, energetic and cultured, are also conservative. . . . If the *Salisbury Review* has a purpose besides that of drawing the venom of the socialist establishment . . . it is that of rewriting the conservative agenda, so that the full extent of the confrontation can be perceived. Our work is only just beginning, and although we may not survive for long, we shall go down with guns blazing, leaving an infamous reputation behind us.

Scruton begins, in part at least, in the enemy's camp. He is an atheist, a trained analytic philosopher, and a product of a highly European philosophical training. His anti-liberalism looks to Hegel more often than to Burke. His starting point is the critique of Cartesian dualism, as begun by Kant and extended (in the Scrutonian analysis) by Hegel and the later Wittgenstein. The object of attack is the Cartesian (and by implication the liberal) self. "The ambition of Kant and Hegel, to achieve a philosophy which removes the 'self' from the beginning of knowledge so as to return it in an enriched and completed form at the end, has perhaps now been fulfilled," is how Scruton puts it in his *From Descartes to Wittgenstein*, which appeared in 1981. This is an unusual approach for conservative writers in England, whose hostility toward European philosophy is as pronounced as their ignorance of it. But Scruton's conservatism is a brainier version. His concerns range far beyond the boundaries of most contemporary conservative pundits: to aesthetics, to metaphysics, to architecture, and now, in his latest book, *Sexual Desire*, to sex.

THIS LAST addition has a familiar Scrutonian ring to it. The greater part of Scruton's public relations campaign is not designed for the general public at all, but for the intelligentsia. His aim is partly to make conservatism a sexy research topic and to reclaim lost intellectual ground by staging terror strikes into the heart of the enemy camp and then retreating. *Sexual Desire* is the intellectual equivalent of the latest heat-seeking missile.

The project of the book is threefold: to evoke a phenomenology of sex, to deduce a morality of sex, and then to construct a political framework with which to enforce the morality. The first two projects take up considerably more space than the third. The essential idea of the phenomenology is that sexual desire is rooted in a person who is neither a Platonist refugee from his body nor a Kinseyist slave to it. Rather he is a person at home in his body, "not (to borrow Descartes' image) as a pilot in a ship, but as an incarnate self. My body is identical with me, and sexual purity is the precious guarantee of this." It is from this premise that the morality of sex develops.

The benefits of this philosophical freewheeling are some delicate insights in a much trampled area. Scruton sets out in elegant terms, for instance, the way in which involuntary actions, such as a blush, a glance, or an erection, can be the most powerful signs of an acutely voluntary desire; and he articulates a conception of sexual hunger as an urge to enter conversation, rather than to assuage appetite, and of orgasm as an interruption of congress rather than its end. The defense of pain in sex, the analysis of shame, the relationship of love to esteem, and the uncontractual nature of marriage are all insights that one might not expect from a conventional political "conservative."

But the book ends with a sudden spring back into the old conservative closet that calls into question the sincerity of the essay's quest. Once sexual fulfillment has been lucidly defended as a virtue, it still turns out to be immoral for homosexuals to practice it, thanks to a peculiarly contrived argument about the "complementarity" of desire. In this way, around one-tenth of humanity is shut out from any prospect of Scruton's sexual virtue for reasons they cannot help. Others are, too. Despite the importance of sexual congress for the Aristotelian fruition of the person, Scruton gives no quarter to Freud's attempt to help or explain the sexually shy, awkward, or incapacitated. This negative conclusion reveals a lack of understanding of how the old order could, and still does, destroy the sexual virtue of countless people—not least Scruton's allies in the conservative camp. It is not an accident that the party that still proclaims Victorian virtues has had the closest acquaintance with Victorian vice; Cecil Parkinson and Jeffrey Archer are just the latest in a long list.

SCRUTON'S defense of Victorian morality would have made sense, of course, if a regular conservative argument, invoking religious revelation or natural law, had been brought in. But his modern atheism does not allow for such a grounding. Religion, in an atheist world, is regarded as a lost cause: "The 'restoration of the sacred' may be a political hope," reveals Scruton, "but it cannot be a political task: to make it one is to risk the most violent cataclysm and the collapse of liberal political institutions."

Then what precisely is the criterion for Scruton's argument? Philosophy? Yet philosophy—at least what passes for philosophical investigation in the phenomenological part of the book—would seem to lead in a direction far less constricting and repressive than the book's stern final admonitions suggest. We are left with the suspicion that the turnaround stems more from a classic Scrutonian device: the cynical use of philosophy to support a particular political structure. In short, philosophy in Scruton's hands turns out to reveal our inability to trust a philosophical critique of the world that has created us. All that is left is an unillusioned defense of the old

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bourgeois order, and the lukewarm hope that it will provide some antidote to the desacralized world that now haunts not only conservatives. In this there is security at least, even if it is impossible to know whether it is the security of a delusion or a truth. As Scruton puts it, "Out of the mute objectivity of the surrounding world, a voice suddenly calls to me, with a clear and intelligible command. It tells me who I am, and enjoins me to enter the place that has been kept for me." The real question here, of course, is why it is the old bourgeois order, and not the new one, that makes us feel at home; and without an argument independent of the structure he is defending, Scruton's conservative sexual ethic cannot finally persuade us. He can merely convey a mood—and an anachronistic one at that.

III.

MAURICE COWLING takes this abnegation of persuasion even further. A don in Peterhouse College, Cambridge, for 23 years, a former Tory parliamentary candidate (unsuccessful), and a literary editor of the *Spectator* (1971-72), Cowling's vision of social order is not bourgeois-liberal. It is confessional, in the shape of the Church of England. In this sense, his conservatism is much less tainted with liberalism than Scruton's, and even less at ease with modernity. Cowling's defense of Anglicanism has the added strength of never discussing the truth or falsehood of the faith he defends. All that is at issue for this distinctively modern conservative is the political power that true believers can wield. This is the key import of religion: that it can render service as a doctrine, interchangeable with political doctrine, in the necessary battle for political power.

Even the structure of his latest product, the second volume of *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England*, reflects this underlying conviction. The book is a series of "assaults," "counterassaults," and "battles." Literature is considered as "doctrine," schools of thought as "conspiracies" inspired and concocted by enemies. There is no attempt at a dispassionate reconstruction of the past as it was. Such a project, in Cowling's eyes, is largely meaningless. As he says, "The reader who looks for it in these pages deserves to be disappointed." Nor is there an attempt to make arguments that would be subject to reasonable assessment; they are merely used "in order to manifest resentment."

The result is a rather exhausting and at times objectionable read. The book amounts to a series of essays on several thinkers, idiosyncratically selected and grouped in battle formation. Each is summarily dismissed or patronizingly approved in the tone of some marginally neurotic headmaster of an English public school giving end-of-term reports on his pupils. Shaw, in later years, "became a bore, windbag and licensed clown." Havelock Ellis "needed to write in order to live; his writing reflected the fact." But the book is a deliberate polemic, if a contrived one, and it must be read as such. At times it approaches a rant only conceivable within the portals of a Cambridge college, as when Cowling explains how Gilbert Murray's Hellenism, Comteanism, and post-Gladstonian liberalism were apparently formed "by an unsympathetic world which had been created by Lloyd George, T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, Stalin, Hitler and Nasser." The left, it appears, has no copyright on paranoia.

Cowling willfully sums up the corrosive and largely self-defeating acidity of many conservative writers, whose anger at modernity culminates in a refusal even to converse with it. The upshot is that the book, for all its conceptual coherence, does the opposite of what its Christian heroes are praised for. If it is meant as an apology for the Church of England, it comes across as an apology for Anglican politics rather than for Anglican spirituality. By disillusioning us completely, Cowling's argument renders us unable to take any side but the one on which we happen to be already. But this, according to Cowling, is all that religion is anyway: "those directions of the mind and will which precede and transcend all activities and subjects of study." And the submission that precedes study is to a faith of such extraordinary political usefulness that we may wonder whether the God we are putting our faith in is the God of Christianity or of social control.

It comes as no surprise, then, to find that transcendent religious truths do not encumber Cowling's conservatism, or his political judgment. In his earlier work, *The Impact of Hitler* (1974), he asserted that it was neither "morally obligatory" nor "prudentially self-evident" that Hitler be obstructed in eastern central Europe, and that appeasement's only flaw was a prudential one: it underestimated

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the ease with which France would fall. Churchill is a prime enemy of this strain of conservatism, especially for his implication in establishing the hegemony of the Soviet Union and, particularly, the United States, which Cowling sees as the most important result of the Second World War. Churchill's relationship with Margaret Thatcher, then, is of particular interest. Her belief in the paramount importance of Western freedom and her love for the United States—placing her firmly in the Churchillian tradition—is in stark contrast to Cowling's view of freedom. As he put it in assessing the possibility of a "new conservatism" in 1978:

> [It] is not freedom that Conservatives want; what they want is the sort of freedom that will maintain existing inequalities, or restore lost ones, so far as political action can do this. . . . [It] is a way of not saying what they want, a way of attributing principle to a social structure they wish to conserve or restore.

What is interesting here is not merely the desire to maintain existing inequalities (and why is inequality the prime conservative or Christian concern?), but the desire to restore lost ones. It is an argument that shows clearly how the doctrinaire opposition to an increasingly liberalized world has ended in recent years not in conservatism, but in an ideological determination to pursue conservatism's temptation: reaction.

IV.

TO MENTION the *Spectator* in the same breath as Cowling is not to suggest that it follows the extremity of his positions. But it has certainly absorbed the flavor of his concerns. Given the Cambridge-conservative education of its new management, this is hardly surprising. Under the editorship of Charles Moore, the magazine has taken the issues of religion and culture far more seriously than it did under the more eclectic and relaxed ethos of its former editor, Alexander Chancellor. Editorials can now seriously intone, as one did in July, that "empires rise and perish, kingdoms wax and wane, the Church endures," in a way that would have seemed deliberately self-mocking a few years ago.

More importantly, the influential magazine has adopted a style of reactionary chic particularly suited to a British political debate now more concerned with surface than with substance. Glossier pages fittingly reflect an archly aristocratic temper, all the more appealing for being hopelessly fake. As the *Spectator*'s literary section increasingly covers the biographies of society figures of the 1920s, its City of London coverage has been extended and its pages besieged by an influx of double-barreled names, such as Hugh Montgomery Massingberd and Ambrose Evans-Pritchard (to name only the most awkward combinations). Also among this year's innovations were the Duchess of Devonshire's weekly diary and an editorial devoted to commemorating a schoolmaster at Eton. The latest example of the new direction is the magazine's "poll" that asks only the "important people" (96 percent male) for their views on politics, and discovers that they too find Thatcher somewhat vulgar, even if she is the lesser of unpleasantnesses. And unpleasantnesses (not evils) is the word—for the one thing that typifies the increasingly wan detachment of the *Spectator*'s tone is the lack of any passion or anger or urgency in its pages. As a result, these days it has all the cutting edge of the retired curates it wishes were still its readers.

MUCH OF THIS would be endearing, if it weren't for the fact that it is so artificially and self-consciously contrived. Detachment is forgivable when it is convincing. Some of the regular writers manage it with ease: Alexander Chancellor's genuinely confused dismay at almost all aspects of contemporary television culture was, until his column was terminated, nicely matched by Jeffrey Bernard's resolute inebriation in the face of organized life. But the body of the magazine has adopted a conservatism as self-absorbed as it is intellectualized. Powellite dislike of the Commonwealth, for example, led this summer to a vicious personal attack on the queen, with a caricature on the cover and the headline "How She Keeps Her Empire." (Respect for the monarch is no longer, it seems, a clever enough conservative position.)

Part of the Powellite foreign policy position is also reflected in a barely veiled hostility toward the United States. For a conservative magazine, the *Spectator*'s American coverage is dominated by journalists whose liberal or left-wing credentials can hardly be bettered, from John Mortimer to Christopher Hitchens. The Libyan raid occasioned a hostile tirade—in stark contrast to the magazine's support of stronger action against IRA terrorists. But contempt for American liberalism abroad neatly balances cultural pessimism at home. And the youthful expression of aged depression (known as "Young Fogeyism") has become a popular trend. For the still uninitiated, a *Young Fogey Handbook* appeared last year, to fill them in on the latest quirks. Scruton's and Cowling's mood has become agreeably marketable.

ESSENTIALLY there are three Young Fogeys, a kind of Holy Trinity. They are A. N. Wilson, Charles Moore, and Gavin Stamp. Wilson is a massively prolific and popular novelist in his early 30s, slight and self-consciously gray in appearance. He rides on his rustic bike, in bicycle clips, around Oxford, where he enjoys taking tea in small cafés frequented largely by traffic wardens and off-duty policemen and featuring Holman Hunt reproductions and pictures of Winston Churchill on the walls. Charles Moore is editor of the *Spectator*, in his late 20s, from Cambridge via the *Daily Telegraph* editorial staff. Gavin Stamp is an architectural historian who lives in an extraordinarily preserved house in the middle of one of the most notorious red-light districts in London. That the Young Fogeys are the subject of intense ridicule is no cause for wonder: they have a genius for self-publicity and, apart from Moore, sustain a prolific output.

Indeed, their first collaboration could have been designed by a parodist. Its cover displays the title *The Church in Crisis* with their three names emblazoned ecclesiastically beneath the image of a stained-glass window. The book is divided into three parts, each reflecting accurately the disposition of one of the three figures. Moore's analysis of the workings of the Anglican bureaucracy is an impressive piece of rigorous reporting, though it will bore anybody who finds such issues as synod politics less scintillating than Moore does. Wilson revels, as usual, in camp stories about gay priests and eccentric services, but he manages to discuss quite sensibly the stupidities of some forms of Church training and the need for greater lay involvement at informal levels. Wilson is also unique among his co-authors in alluding to the central questions of faith, even if he does so in shudderingly pious tones; belief itself is something that neither Moore nor Stamp seems particularly concerned with. Moore's thesis, for example, that Church bureaucracy ex-

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cludes practicing Anglicans, ignores the rather elementary fact that there are virtually no practicing Anglicans left.

It is Stamp's essay, though, that really gives the game away. It is by far the most readable, and at times it is hysterically funny. It largely comprises descriptions of services in different Anglican churches visited by Stamp over an extended period. Suddenly we are confronted with Anglicanism in the raw. Yet Stamp's concern is not simply the nature of faith, but its structure. He is keen to point out the connections between architecture, art, liturgy, and faith that he feels many contemporary Anglicans fail to see. Stamp's illustration of the secularization, politicization, and bastardization of the delicate structures of transcendental aesthetics dissects the cant of many self-consciously "modern" approaches to religion.

Still, it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that all this effort is aimed at a renewal not of faith, but of a political culture that views religion as its tool rather than its master. Thus the object of veneration on the cover of the book is a stained-glass icon of the national flag. And Stamp's most telling moments come in political satire: "Dull, complacent, cosy services combined with baring of middle-class guilt about the Third World is not, however, confined to country churches. It can happen in towns . . . ."

It is not faith, but a particular manifestation of *English* faith, that matters; and it is a Church that can touch even atheists and agnostics in a broad cultural, religious, and political sweep that is Stamp's model. When he talks about chaotic church services, for example, it is difficult not to feel that he is really talking about a chaotic England that persistently refuses to live up to its "great traditions." Stamp's "Church Going" is as depressing as Larkin's, but it lacks Larkin's resolute unsentimentality and realism. Stamp is searching for an England that no longer exists, rather than a faith that, in Christian terms, can always exist. It is in this way, then, that Stamp's arguments are finally less worrying in their consequences for politics than in their ramifications for religion.

V.

AUBERON WAUGH'S Catholicism manages to distance him from the peculiarly comprehensive dilemma that confronts the more earnest of the new Tory Anglicans. But his role in the resurrection of a distinctively conservative sensibility is perhaps unparalleled. *Private Eye*, the savage English humor magazine in which until recently Waugh wrote a diary, served in the late 1970s to destroy serious left-wing politics as a national force by popularizing a devastating satire of it. And Waugh's constant saying of the reactionary unsayable has certainly enabled such sentiments to become less shocking. Like Scruton, but with considerably more success, Waugh has moved the public debate in his direction.

It is hardly a positive direction. Take his views on the thorny question of women priests: "Can we be sure, for instance, that menstrual strain might not produce intemperate sermons? That the heavy sedation which so many women require permanently nowadays might not interfere with their sacred duties . . . ?" It is difficult to explain how, within the context of Waugh's writing and within the bounds of English humor, this is perhaps not as offensive as it sounds. Waugh's humor depends, in its semiserious attempt to provoke hysterical reactions from those he is too bored or too lazy to attack in a more serious vein, on its offensiveness. And some of his

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points spring from a pseudoaristocratic libertarianism, which, in its opposition to the power of the state, hits some right-wing causes too: drug testing, anti-alcohol campaigns, and officious, moralizing legislation. More often than not, however, his targets are the easy ones: the disabled ("our four-wheeled friends"), the working class ("its brutal stupidity as well as its natural greed, its vindictive bloody-mindedness as well as its natural idleness"), and other usually pitied groups ("British prostitutes . . . have the reputation for being not only the ugliest and greediest but also the laziest in the world"). He even joins in the odd game of Jew-baiting, in good English aristocratic fashion: "There is much to detest about Mrs. Thatcher and her government. Watching her kneel in front of the Holocaust Monument at Yad Vashem many of us might have decided that a vote for nice Dr. Owen [the SDP leader]. . . ." The point is that these comments should be taken seriously, and yet not taken seriously. In that way, Waugh can get his points across without ever being fully responsible for them, all the while being very funny or very unfunny at many people's expense. It's a brilliant technique that he has made his own.

Brideshead Benighted is a collection of pieces Waugh has written for the *Spectator* over the last ten years. Its title, calculated to cash in on his father Evelyn's reputation in the United States, beautifully distinguishes Waugh's aristocratic persona from his non-aristocratic sense of where the fast buck is. As is inevitable in such a miscellany, the sharpness of each piece is blurred by the merciless succession of them, but that is not the only reason that Waugh should have left his outpourings to the weekly *Spectator* column. Pulled together, what strikes one most is their essential shallowness. If there is a unifying thread, it hardly twitches with purpose. His is simply a lively picture of an England in desperate decline, complemented by a willful, witty, and resolute refusal to do anything about it.

PERHAPS IT is unfair to object to such carefully constructed detachment, or to criticize any humor except on the grounds that you don't find it funny. My problem is that I do find it funny, but that such amused detachment is an awkward position for anyone who cares about the country he lives in. And the unavoidable conclusion about Waugh is that he lacks this most naturally conservative instinct. He unabashedly cares much more about himself and his (mythical) class than he does about his country. Or worse still, he does care about his country, but feels it is unsophisticated or naive or boring to say so. It's all part of what he calls his "equanimity."

The problem here is that he does not sound very full of equanimity, nor is it possible to conceive of anyone even bordering on equanimity engaging in the sort of vitriol that Waugh does. What it amounts to, then, is a good pose, from which he can avoid responsibility for his opinions and for the idiosyncrasy of his impulses. And, on another level, it serves to keep him impervious to the obvious sense in which his humor is a serious business. It's serious in that it deliberately, and at the highest levels of pseudo-sophistication, destroys confidence in a culture, without any recourse except to an equanimity that even he doesn't manage. Waugh's view of British life, then, is not a recipe for Britain's problem: it *is* Britain's problem. Too sophisticated to care, too clever to propose, his is the sharpest form of decadence: the vinegar of a once distinguished wine.

VI.

THE SAME could be said, sadly, for almost all the other prominent products of England's "conservative revival." A symptom of malaise rather than its cure, they have only nudged at the edges of the task of reconstructing a positive conservatism that can govern a liberalized society while retaining the benefits of conservative thought and feeling. Their rejection of some of the platitudes of the conservative postwar past—most particularly the unreconstructed Keynesianism of the so-called "wets"—is well taken. But their counterrevolution seems shot through with a self-indulgence designed to infuriate their fellow countrymen rather than to persuade them. The great chance for English conservatism—the chance to develop and to channel the mood of postwar gloom into a new, conservative project for the country—has been blown. And in the process even the most cherished conservative concerns have been relegated to the status of a "style": religion reduced at times to a fashion, philosophy to a game.

The key to the failure lies primarily in the self-consciousness of the project. Most of the writers are keen to be "conservative" before they are anything else, as if ideology were the first resort, rather than the last, of a conservative temperament. And in regarding doctrine as something enshrined in a particular version of the past, they remain blithely unaware of what might pass for the real attractions of conservatism for their own generation: its freedom from the constricting ideology they want it to be, its openness to the new, its enjoyment of the present. Conservatism's defense of the past springs from precisely these sentiments. For this reason it is perhaps the most liberating temperament of all, in that its process of disillusionment frees us from those ideological ghosts that haunt our present composure. It is for the present in which it fully lives that conservatism makes use of the past. But the new conservative catechists have been intent on embalming the past in order to excoriate the present. In so doing, they have forfeited the chance of being anything in this hopelessly modern world but depressive and marginal ideologues. Hence the necessity for a "style." It disguises a profound unhappiness; and it is their only medium for dialogue with the outside world.

It is a relief, then, to discover a new edition of Michael Oakeshott's *Experience and Its Modes*, which first appeared in 1933 and has been reissued this year. Oakeshott, whose philosophical career now spans 50 years, including the professorship of political science at the London School of Economics, is a Tory philosopher noteworthy for his quiet abstention from the loud "redefinition of conservatism" of recent years. His first book, in pursuing the tradition of German idealist philosophy at a time when that tradition was firmly in eclipse, reveals the same independence of judgment. Unlike Scruton's eclecticism, the book reflects a unified philosophical structure (largely intact throughout Oakeshott's subsequent writing and teaching), and never even hints at Scruton's manipulation of philosophic ideas for political ends. Unlike Cowling, Oakeshott sees philosophy as something more than doctrine—indeed, as the opposite of doctrine:

> Philosophy, for me and for others, means experience without reservation or presupposition, experience which is self-conscious and self-critical throughout, in which the determination to remain unsatisfied with anything short of a completely coherent world of ideas is absolute and unqualified.

This crucial work, rarely read by those who concentrate on the more "political"

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essays of his *Rationalism in Politics*, underscores Oakeshott's reputation as a philosopher rather than as merely some kind of "political conservative." The power of his conservatism is in its emergence from a rigorously independent philosophical exercise that attempts to explicate the separateness of intellectual and practical life, so as to make politics an essentially "practical" rather than an essentially "ideological" exercise.

Reflection on Oakeshott's philosophy reveals still more clearly that the new "conservative ideology" is in fact a contradiction in terms. Oakeshott's conservatism sees such argumentation as already embroiled in an ideological invasion of practical life, which is precisely what he takes to be the essence of modern liberalism. What is more, in its repercussions for the moral life, Oakeshott's perspective defends a moral community as it already functions, rather than as a frozen mirror of the past. It deems "reaction" to be as objectionable as liberal utopianism, indeed to be its flip-side.

But perhaps more interestingly, Oakeshott brings home clearly what the Thatcher years have taught. Their successes, such as they are, have more to do with Thatcher's pragmatism (of which Oakeshott undoubtedly approves) than with any new ideology. Those successes have also revealed how the conservative regret of modernity, if ever translated into outright hostility, can have disastrous consequences for the social cohesion that conservatives most want to preserve. It excludes and it attacks—the sure sign of a destructive and self-destructive politics. But this lesson—that "bringing Britain back" is a dangerous illusion—has already been learned in the sheer practice of government. The final and more difficult lesson of the Thatcher period may take longer to sink in, because practice can never teach it. It is that conservative thinkers, in assaulting the New Left, can easily become the mirror image of it.

TALES OUT OF SCHOOL

Fools and Other Stories by Njabulo Ndebele

(Readers International, 280 pp., $14.95, $7.95 paper)

When the history of the last years of white rule in South Africa comes one day to be written, the year 1976 will loom large. For in the national uprisings of 1976 a powerful new (and endlessly renewable) force entered the fray: a generation of politicized black children impatient with what they saw as the capitulation of their parents to apartheid, and heedless of life and limb. It was the younger brothers and sisters of these same children, better organized, better led, who brought the machinery of local administration to an abrupt stop in 1985, turned the black townships into a battlefield, put a sudden (and in many cases brutally chilling) brake on the process of co-option and bribery by which the government planned to turn a growing black middle class into a buffer between white comfort and black anger, and precipitated a crisis of confidence that has crippled the national economy.

The uprisings of 1976 gave a new spur to black writing, and soon novels set in the battle-torn townships were appearing from such writers as Mongane Serote (*To Every Birth Its Blood*) and Sipho Sepamla (*A Ride on the Whirlwind*). There was a flood, too, of theatrical performances—in the improvisational mode known as "township drama"—and poetry readings, with much of the poetry finding its way into the pages of the Johannesburg-based journal *Staffrider*.

Among the young writers who emerged in the wake of 1976 was Njabulo Ndebele. His first collection, *Fools and Other Stories*, which came out in South Africa in 1983, has now appeared in the United States. At first glance Ndebele seems to have little in common with his engagé contemporaries. His stories deal with the lives not of revolutionaries, but of young children. They are set not in the Soweto of 1976, but in a placid-seeming township near Nigel in the Transvaal, in the early 1960s. The figures he analyzes are not militants and security policemen, but a generation of parents and a generation of children. In addition, Ndebele writes the clean, polished English of someone who is clearly not only at home in the language but has passed through an orthodox literary apprenticeship (he in fact holds graduate degrees from British and American universities). This is in striking contrast to writers of the Soweto school, whose language, spiked with township slang and vernacular turns of phrase, unliterary to the point of being anti-literary and even subliterary, is as much the legacy of poor schooling in a linguistically segregated society as it is an affirmation of proletarian origins.

But we are entirely mistaken if we conclude that what was going on in respectable black homes in Transvaal towns of the 1960s is of no relevance to the South Africa of our times. Ndebele's stories are about the coming to consciousness of his generation, the generation born around 1953, the year in which Hendrik Verwoerd, then minister of native affairs, closed independent (usually mission-run) schools for blacks and imposed across the country a network of schools peddling a body of knowledge called "Bantu Education," which was designed to fit black children for the lower echelons of the economy as well as to convert them to the Afrikaner's vision of South Africa's past and future. It was against Bantu Education, carried out in schools chronically overcrowded and underfunded, that the children marched in 1976. The vast, suffocating body of Bantu Education, under another name, still sprawls across the country in 1986. It is the ever-present background (though not the subject) of Ndebele's stories.

Bantu Education is particularly the background of the long story that gives the collection its title. Zamani is a teacher in a grade school. Once regarded by the children with awe and even fear, he has in middle age grown into a demoralized drunkard and womanizer. He has lost his wife's respect and lives under the thumbs of his school principal—a man who has sold himself to the system to the extent of hanging a portrait of Verwoerd in his office—and other black officials and policemen paid to enforce the white man's law. It is 1966, a time of stagnation and seeming hopelessness: the Dutch Reformed Church casts its shadow over the township, the pressure of apartheid lies heavily on all.

Into Zamani's life comes Zani, a South African student home from the school he

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attends in Swaziland. A lonely figure in the somnolent township, Zani brings with him strange new ideas that we now recognize as tenets of the Black Consciousness movement, ideas about the antiquity and continuity of African thought, about a time-perspective in which Western colonialism and Western Christianity are only a transitory episode in African history. Zamani, who has fathered and repudiated an illegitimate child, is attracted to the young man as to a son, despite the latter's somewhat puritanical disdain of him. He puts his job at risk by allowing Zani to address his students and urge them not to celebrate the white man's nationalistic holidays. He himself takes Zani's words seriously, more seriously than he will consciously allow; at the end of the story it is he and he alone who stands firm under the lash of a white bully's whip.

What the young man has more or less haphazardly taught Zamani is not only to be a man and an African again, but to reassume the vocation he has abandoned, that of teacher and healer of his people. The writer whose influence is clearest on Ndebele at this point is the Ghanaian novelist Ayi Kwei Armah, who similarly links the rediscovery and teaching of the true history of a people with the healing of a wounded social psyche and the recovery of genuine independence. (The storyteller is in Armah's view the person best fitted to perform this healing role in modern society.)

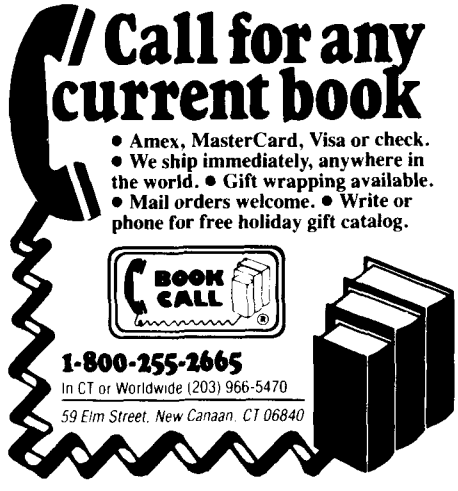
NDEBELE'S STORY unavoidably brings to mind Dostoyevsky's Russia, a land of penniless clerks and apathetic serfs where feverish and prophetic young men wander about preaching strange ideas and exhorting the people to awaken. Zamani in particular is a Dostoyevskian holy fool, a man with a dark past that seems to have included rape and sadism. An unlikely healer of his people, he is a living paradox—"lovable evil," as Zani's girlfriend puts it.

Ndebele's greatest strength here is his sense of the mysterious depths of the self. It does considerable violence to a character like Zamani to say that he simply represents the last generation of the black intelligentsia before 1976—a generation that on the one hand had lost touch with an authentic African past, and yet on the other had found its way into the future blocked by racist bureaucrats for whom Westernized Africans were not only a threat to white jobs but freaks, offenses against God and nature; a generation of which the writer Can Themba (1924-68), drinking himself to death in exile in Swaziland, was an emblematic figure. Zamani *is* such a person; but he is himself as well, and his inner life—in particular his painful love of the wife he has betrayed—is fully and sympathetically realized.

THE CHILDREN who are the main actors in the other four stories of the collection are similarly realized from the inside out. In "The Music of the Violin" a well-to-do arriviste black couple, for reasons of social prestige, make their son take violin lessons. Through the streets of the township the boy trudges with his violin, burning under the gibes of loitering teenage thugs. The violin soon becomes the intolerable badge of a foreign culture and a suspect class, and the sign of his parents' shallow aspiration that he rise, if not *past* the system (as child prodigies are now and then allowed to do), then *through* the system. Yet when the boy finally summons up enough courage to announce to his parents, before their shocked guests, that he will no longer play the violin, it is the parents' pain and indignation on which the story focuses. Trapped in the ghetto that apartheid has prescribed for them, they must confront the fact that their money cannot buy their children a passport out of the ghetto; as the wailing mother puts it, the street has prevailed over the home.

Street and *home* are in fact the two opposing zones in which Ndebele's stories are played out. The home is a zone of order and security, usually created by the hard work and self-sacrifice of a woman. The street, contested by criminal gangs and police patrols, is a zone of disorder and insecurity, though also of vitality. Between these zones Ndebele's children move, trying to satisfy the demands of the home without transgressing the norms of the street. The task is, of course, impossible to fulfill for any length of time: one of the irrationalities the stories point to is that by providing no space in society into which black children could advance, apartheid forced them all into the street, where they formed themselves into the army that is at present besieging apartheid's bastions.

Perhaps the best realized of all the stories in the collection is the briefest, "The Prophetess." A small boy is sent out by his mother to fetch a bottle of holy water from the local prophetess. (Not that the mother doesn't trust Western medicine: she is in fact a nurse. She merely wants to cover all the possibilities.) The prophetess, a disturbing old woman who lives on the far side of the township in a house always in semidarkness, sings a song over the boy that he understands not at all, embraces him with a strangely penetrative touch, and sends him home with the holy water. But on the way back he has a brush with street life and the bottle is broken. With a self-assurance that surprises him, he fills a new bottle with water from a faucet and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takes it in to his mother. As she drinks it she feels (or imagines she feels) the pain begin to subside; and at that moment, healing his mother, the boy suddenly knows that he has taken a step toward adulthood and the vocation of healer.

The least satisfying of the stories is "The Uncle," a kind of dry run for "Fools." Both of these stories are about middle-aged teacher figures. But whereas in the latter story Ndebele performs the narration from inside the complex and tormented adult consciousness of Zamani, in "The Uncle" he does it from the viewpoint of a young boy, to whom the uncle, who arrives out of the blue to practice the trumpet and conduct complicated rituals of body cleansing in the bathtub, is simply a figure of wonder. The boy drinks in his uncle's disquisitions on African philosophy, religion, and history; but along what personal road the uncle arrived at his realization that knowledge of Egyptian hieroglyphics is the firmest base from which to recover an African identity, or what such a quest must have entailed in modern-day South Africa, the child doesn't have the wit to ask. Though the story again exhibits Ndebele's feel for the texture of childhood experience, in this case the child's-eye view turns out to be merely the external view, the easy option.

It is instructive to compare Ndebele with such contemporaries of his as Mtutuzeli Matshoba, whose collection of stories *Call Me Not a Man* first brought him into prominence in 1979, and Mbulelo Mzamane (*Mzala* [1980], *The Children of Soweto* [1982]). Matshoba and Mzamane are, in the terms I have used, street writers, for whom fictional energy is sparked by contact and conflict of the most abrasive kind. Their literary descent is not from the Afro-Caribbean Nègritude movement and the West African novel but from a homebred South African journalistic tradition of gritty realism. Their English is lavish, careless, without nuance; in Mzamane's case it bears the marks of a second language.

Their stories are probably more in tune with the mood of the townships today—angry, impatient, violent—than are the stories in *Fools*, with their focus on inner states, on innocence and guilt, on self-discovery, on social tensions as experienced within the individual psyche. No doubt the fact that Ndebele does not live in South Africa has something to do with this—he is on the faculty of the University of Lesotho—though what his prophetess calls "the fire that is coming" by now flickers all over the subcontinent. Among present-day South African writers he reminds one most of the polished storywriter of Indian descent Ahmed Essop (*The Hajji and Other Stories* [1978]), though he does not have Essop's satiric flair.

There are several elements of Ndebele's stories with which one might find fault—what we have here, after all, is a first book by a young writer (though an extremely gifted one) working in a time of crisis that makes the heaviest of demands on the artist. Still, one observation is worth spelling out. The endings of the two longer stories, "The Uncle" and "Fools," do not develop out of the logic of the action, but have the air of having been willfully imposed. The stories with endings that work are the less ambitious ones—that is to say, those without novelistic ambitions, their feet firmly planted in the Chekhovian short-story tradition. Why should this be so? It seems to me that a feature of the South African novel for some while has been that its writers have not known how to end what they have begun, or what the times they are representing have begun for them. It is as though the end, the true and just end, has assumed the aspect of that which cannot be imagined, that which can be represented only in fantasy, whether dire or wishful.

J. M. COETZEE

J. M. Coetzee is the author of *Waiting for the Barbarians* (Viking) and *Life and Times of Michael K.* (Viking). His new novel, *Foe*, will be published by Viking next year.

HISTORY AND HISTRIONICS

Saints and Strangers
by Angela Carter

(Viking, 126 pp., $13.95)

Angela Carter, throwing her voice back over the centuries, displays the talents of a skilled ventriloquist—with one important difference: Carter wants us to see her lips move. In this collection of short stories, her third, she takes apart the accepted morality tales that constitute the sacred cow called History, and exposes, through her own manipulation of them, the cultural conventions that shape our view of the past.

She begins with "The Fall River Axe Murders," a riveting psychological portrait of Lizzie Borden that draws on the textbook determinism of novels like Wharton's *Ethan Frome*. Descended from "the industrious, self-mortifying saints who imported the Protestant ethic wholesale into a land intended for the siesta," a land where "summer and salmonella came in together," Lizzie is doomed from the start. Born in post-Edenic Massachusetts (her town is called Fall River) and christened by her father with a "diminutive"—"a miser in everything, he even cropped off half her name before he gave it to her"—Lizzie slides passively toward the apocalyptic moment that will fix her place in history and its attendant iconography:

> On this burning morning when, after breakfast and the performance of a few household duties, Lizzie Borden will murder her parents, she will, on rising, don a simple cotton frock that, if worn by itself, might be right for the weather. But, underneath, has gone a long, starched cotton petticoat; another starched petticoat, a short one; long drawers; woolen stockings; a chemise; and a whalebone corset that takes her viscera in an unkind hand and squeezes them very tightly.
>
> There is also a heavy linen napkin strapped between her legs because she is menstruating.
>
> In all these clothes, out of sorts and nauseous as she is, in this dementing heat, her belly in a vice, she will heat up a flatiron on a stove and press handkerchiefs with the heated iron . . . .

But the social and physical actualities of Lizzie's time and place account for only a part of Carter's narrative. The Freudian fairy tale that consigns Lizzie to a "fictive, protracted childhood"—and to which any life, given the right storyteller, could logically be reduced—is of-

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fered as yet another explanation of the parricidal crime toward which Lizzie's history builds. When she is two her mother dies, making room for an archetypally wicked stepmother—a gluttonous parasite who grows ever more obese as she nibbles away at the family's emotional and financial resources, to the point of driving her husband to chop off the heads of Lizzie's prized pigeons because she "fancies" them for a pie.

Add to these sociopolitical, psychoanalytical reductions of the Borden tragedy Carter's own condensation of Lizzie's tale and you have the final gloss on a multilayered fiction. For Carter's tale is the product of a fictive "memory," and memory, by its very nature, is selective and imperfect.

EARLY ON, Carter sets the stage for the narrative acrobatics to come, by turning the genre of "The House That Jack Built" on its head. Rather than adding descriptive information bit by bit to a skeletal outline, Carter strips her story down, in full view of the reader, to what she considers its bare emblematic bones, and then steps back to highlight her distortion of historical truth:

> In a mean house on Second Street . . . five living creatures are sleeping in the still, warm early morning.
>
> . . .
>
> The other old man is some kind of kin of Borden's. He doesn't belong here; he is a chance bystander, he is irrelevant.
>
> Write him out of the script.
>
> . . .
>
> *One* old man and three of his women sleep in the house on Second Street.

Yet despite the fiction writer/historian's attempts to define Lizzie Borden for all time, to provide the Ur-reading of her life story, Lizzie remains "a stranger to herself," unable to distinguish in any of the "distorting mirrors" with which her tale is filled ("no mirror in this house does not take your face and twist it out of shape for you") the real Lizzie Borden. Although Carter mounts an extensive tour of the Borden house, she quite pointedly doesn't show us the interior of Lizzie's room. That "yet other door" is "kept securely locked," enabling Carter to clean the historical slate and bring us, in the final sentence of her story, to the pre-symbolic, prehistoric instant when "the Bordens's fatal day trembles on the brink of beginning."

These twice and thrice told tales (a genre in which Carter has dabbled for years) all begin with a literary fait accompli hermetically sealed by historical "fact." In other words, not only are they *about* the fallen world, but they call into question the very notion of an objective, retrievable history unclouded by legend. Carter supplies the missing prologues to these sanctified stories—some of which we learn by rote in grade school—and crafts a "brave new world" of strangers out of a long since colonized past. Returning to the peaceable kingdom of history where Brits befriend Indians and children in baptismal gowns romp unharmed amid wide-eyed and docile beasts—Edward Hicks's mid-19th-century primitive adorns the book's cover—Carter stirs up this settled and sainted fiction, and in the process pits life against art, brother against brother, self against self.

Having shown us, in "The Fall River Axe Murders," the multiplicity of readings (and tellings) that fit any historical event, Carter hones in on the particular axes she wishes to grind. "Our Lady of the Massacre," for instance, unmasks the ethnocentricity that's responsible for so much of the fiction of Early American history. It is the story of a "Lancashire milkmaid" become petty thief and whore who travels by way of Newgate prison to Virginia, there to live among the Indians, most of whom are soon massacred by the British. At the opening of the story, this nameless young woman's future is foretold by her Old World benefactress (the quintessential myopic historian) using a zodiacal chart and knowledge of the stars obtained through "a great telescope" left the old woman by her father: "Though her sight was too bad to make out much . . . what she did not see, she made up, for she said she had poor sight for the things of *this* world but clear sight into the one to come." The old woman prophesies that once in Virginia, whose "rivers flow directly from Eden," her precious charge will be "nowt less than Our Lady of the Red Men." She will bear a "blessed babe whose fathers' fathers never sailed in Noah's Ark" and will convert the natives to the "true religion." Her child will sit "smiling over everything with a gold crown on his head." In short, the American myth of manifest destiny.

But it isn't the way things happened. For "although the Minister would have

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it otherwise," the blasphemous intruders on this native ground were not, of course, the Indians, and no amount of Christian prophecy can smooth over the annihilation of a race. Carter's repentant harlot, who at the very end of the story takes the name of Mary (after her English guardian), repents not of her errant life among the "savages," but of the impulse toward thieving and prostitution with which her mother country has tainted her:

> For all the Minister swears they've come to build the *City of God* in the *New World*, I was the same skivvy as I'd been in Lancashire and no openings for a whore in the *Community of Saints*, either, if I could have found in my heart the least desire to take up my old trade again. But I could not; the Indians had damned me for a *good woman* once and for all.

"Our Lady of the Massacre" is more, however, than a sentimental treatise in reverse. Carter injects the moral seriousness of her authentic first-person narrative with a broad, ironic humor. Early on, having escaped from a sexually abusive overseer, Carter's heroine meets her first "red" woman ("not red but wondrous brown," weaponless and picking herbs), who asks her in sign language to surrender the knife she's stuck in her apron: " 'Now I'm for it!' I thinks but hands it over and she smiles, though not much, for these savages are not half so free with their feelings as we are . . . ." Behind this naive backhandedness lurks a harsh reality, for it is the colonists who transform "Our Lady of the Red Men" into "Our Lady of the Massacre"—leaving "a fair garden blasted of folk," a river "running blood," and a half-breed child who bears the mark of Cain surveying the ruins with a crown "of tears" rather than of gold. At the end of her narrative "Our Lady" weeps "by the waters of Babylon," but the Zion she remembers is the now conquered territory of a heathen tribe, not her "Christian" homeland in Merry Old England. The saints of history's parables, Carter exhorts, appear—by virtue of history's protective veil—to be strangers to the realities of imperialism and fratricide.

With "The Cabinet of Edgar Allan Poe," Carter takes this war of fiction versus reality inside the psyche. She chronicles the decay of experience into theater, and of history (through the reflexive quality of her prose) into literary cliché. Imitating the structure and style of the classic German expressionist film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), as well as the work of Edgar Allan Poe, Carter allies the filmic dissolve of truth into fiction with the chiaroscuro of democracy and tyranny, the revolving janus of freedom and repression. Poe, who has grown up "under the blackstars of the slave states," is transported to the "austere morning" of the Republic where "stern, democratic light scrubs apparitions off the streets" and "a man must make his own penumbra if he wants concealment." In this setting that "admits of no ambiguities," and in the simplistic categories of historical legend, "Either you are a saint or a stranger." But as the lights dim on Carter's Gothic tale and she begins to create her own fictional penumbras, it becomes more and more difficult to tell the strangers from the saints.

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, from which Carter borrows here, centers on the relationship between two characters whose uncertain identities are the crux of the film. Francis is either a criminal who has performed murders for a showman at a local fair or a delusive and unreliable narrator in the process of being cured; Caligari is either a manipulative tyrant committing murders-by-proxy or a benevolent healer. Carter's "Cabinet" ends with Poe, within whom both these figures are contained, staring into a "reflective glass" (after shaving off his moustache) at features that are "his own and yet not his own." Instead of what he believes to be his reverse image, Poe sees his wife, Virginia, "the loved and lost one" whom he may or may not have killed. The specter of this imagined offense haunts him, as does his native loyalty to the "slave state" whose name she shares. Unable to reconcile his nation's idea of health with the stranger within and to create a whole, democratic self, Poe surrealistically disintegrates as he stands at the mirror, engulfed by the shadow of past crimes—even as he calls melodramatically for "Lights!" The parody of Whitman's ebullient "Song of Myself" that helps to introduce this tale, then, goes to the heart of Carter's project: "So you say he overacts? Very well; he overacts. There is a past history of histrionics in his family."

IT IS THE interaction between history and histrionics, between life and art, that most fascinates Carter. The literary models that stand behind her retellings of historical legends—*Ethan Frome* behind "The Fall River Axe Murders," *Moll Flanders* behind "Our Lady of the Massacre," *Caligari* behind "The Cabinet of Edgar Allan Poe"—heighten our sense that what Carter herself is doing, as she reopens the closed books of history, is fiction, indeed cannot help but be fiction. But then so is history.

Even in the somewhat less dazzling pieces in her collection—although these, too, are impressive—Carter retraces the steps of her precursors, and daringly breaks new ground. "The Kiss," a story told, as its narrator claims, "in simple, geometric shapes and the bold colors of a child's box of crayons," romanticizes the unfulfilled dreams of Uzbek peasant women after the Russian Revolution. "Peter and the Wolf" revises the well-known symphonic folk tale as a young man's confrontation with his long-lost sister who grew up among the wolves in a pre-Fall wilderness. "Overture and Incidental Music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*" recasts Shakespeare's play as "a midsummer's nightmare"—based on a feminist reading that disowns the 19th-century Mendelssohnian nostalgia that

ZSA-ZSA, IN DEFENSE OF HER PEARLS

But, my dear, believe me, I do love
Jewels. Truly, I do. It is not an affectation.
It is my essence.

A sapphire bracelet, an emerald tiara
Are things innately worth the having
In a way words aren't.

Why do you think so many worthy citizens
Representing the best of all possible interests
Are all haunting 47th Street?

Obviously, we're not cruising for Hassidim.
We are exercising our genius for converting
Dough into karats. For looking like

Parrots! And what is all this wearisome
Talk about dictatorship? I have lived in Rio,
My dear, I know. But, so?

Are *you* so much more superior, spiritually?
When the next mambo commences, don't your
Hips sway? Mine do. Okay?

TOM DISCH

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disinfected Shakespeare's wood, "cleansing it of the grave, hideous and elemental beings with which the superstition of an earlier age had filled it," and turned the play into an ethereal fairy tale. The penultimate tale, "The Kitchen Child," pieces together its jaunty cockney narrator's own biological history as he searches for the mysterious stranger who sired him—and then disappeared while his mother (the head cook in an Edwardian kitchen) was busy with a lobster soufflé.

The last piece in the collection, "Black Venus," provides the perfect finish for *Saints and Strangers*. It revolves around Jeanne Duval, Charles Baudelaire's syphilitic Caribbean Creole mistress—the agent, so the story goes, of a "raped continent's revenge, perpetrating itself in the beds of Europe." But according to Carter's account, which is a play on the myth of the Fall, the reverse is true: it was Baudelaire, or the culture he epitomized, that gave Duval the disease. She "picked up the germ," as all of Carter's wronged heroines pick up their life sentences, "from the very first protector"—whether a historically specific colonialism or a more pervasive, insidious chauvinism. For Carter's purposes, then, Duval, as the sum total of all the good/bad girls that have gone before, is the supreme embodiment of the transpositions of *Saints and Strangers*: "She bent over backwards until the huge fleece of a black sheep, her unfastened hair, spilled on to the Bokhara.... She arched her back so much a small boy could have run under her. Her reversed blood sang in her ears."

Angela Carter's agenda is to let down the hair of our received histories, to unfasten it pin by pin and coax its black sheep out of hiding, to shake out the strands of sexism, racism, and classism that have been woven into it. These virtuosic tales that make strangers of saints and saints of strangers stretch backward beyond the traditional bounds of fiction toward a searing home truth that would emancipate the present—the small boy who runs through the hoop linking the old world and the new.

JENNIFER KRAUSS

CORRECTION

On page 31 of the issue for December 15, Raymond Aron was incorrectly included in a list of intellectuals described as being on the periphery of French fascism. The name should have been Robert Aron.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Strange Preference

ON NOVEMBER 17 Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, the Zulu chief, received an honorary degree from Boston University. There may have been other places where he was accorded the respect due a defiant leader of millions of black people struggling against South African apartheid. But respect is certainly not what he gets from the anti-apartheid establishments in our country. At B.U. several hundred activists picketed the Buthelezi convocation, some complaining that the chief is a one-party state man, which he isn't. In any case, that is hardly what was at issue; one-party states aren't usually what offend these folk. I understand why my friend Saths Cooper, former president of Steven Biko's Black Consciousness movement AZAPO and now Fulbright student here, was among the critics at B.U. He has been in political combat with Inkatha, the organizational base of Buthelezi's power, just as he has with the leadership of the African National Congress. And this combat is not merely over tactics or even over strategy; it is also over the vision of South Africa's future. But what possibly motivates Andrew Young—whose whole idea of world politics is that one should talk to anybody and particularly to terrorists—to counsel Coretta Scott King to refuse to see Buthelezi? And why are many other Americans so eager to disdain him as just another Uncle Tom?

I'VE ENCOUNTERED PEOPLE WHO say that Buthelezi is an ally, unwitting at best, of the regime. It is a lie. He wouldn't countenance the bogus independence option for the Zulus (or for other ethnic groups). He refused to participate in the National Statutory Council unless Nelson Mandela was freed from prison and invited, with other leaders underground or in exile, to participate. He favors an electoral formula based on one man, one vote. He has been a relentless foe of apartheid his entire adult life. So what exactly has he done wrong? I don't pretend that his movement is without sin: there has been gang warfare between Buthelezi's toughs and those of his opponents. People have been killed. But that, alas, is the current norm, not different from elsewhere in Africa and reinforced by the dehumanizing apartheid system introduced by Europeans. And what the Inkatha enforcers have sporadically done does not come close to the rituals of vengeance practiced by ANC loyalists, apparently endorsed by Mrs. Mandela and by the heroine of the popular South African play *Born in the R.S.A.* Buthelezi's most concrete offense is to have convened an *indaba*—a conference of reconciliation—of the black and white (and Asian and "Colored") leadership across much of the political spectrum in KwaZulu and Natal provinces, which promises a democratic, multiracial alternative model to apartheid and to the bloody conflagration that is meant to overthrow it. The minister of home affairs has rejected the proposal, which shows what an unprecedented revolutionary development it is. Despite this, nothing would frustrate the designs of the exiled leaders of the ANC more than a successful example of black and white rule. Their fantasies, like those of most revolutionaries, are of fire and phoenix. Which is why they would rather see intensified oppression by the white regime than a morally serious constitutional framework arrived at peaceably under the auspices of Buthelezi. Their preference is the bureaucratic one for not becoming obsolete. But why should it be our preference too?

DESPITE ITS DISILLUSIONING CAREER in our time, revolution still has its romanticizers. And if there is any government that in its relentless evil sustains the romance of revolution, it is the apartheid system. The romance says that there will be a Walpurgisnacht of destruction, followed by a feast of freedom. This vision consoles many of apartheid's victims. The likely outcome, though, is a really bloody Walpurgisnacht, taking its toll primarily among blacks, and no feast. We moral tourists among world revolutions seem to assume that the forces that portend the most violent destruction also promise the deeper freedoms. Hence the largely unexamined support for the ANC and the bias against its black competitors. Oh yes, the ANC has something else going for it. It is anti-American, anti-free enterprise, anti-democratic—a straight flush in this political game.

NOW, THERE IS NO REASON for South Africans to be pro-American. Our record of callousness and worse in the face of the misery of the South African majorities guarantees this. Neither sanctions nor disinvestment, whatever their merits, will much affect this situation. Still, anti-Americanism is not by itself a virtue, and it certainly isn't a certificate of wisdom, especially when it is combined with ideological affinities to the Soviet Union. So the wide American preference for anti-American South African blacks is at once suspect and masochistic. Revolutionaries anointed in the West by church leaders and politicians and university people receive also the unction of their financial support. At home, these revolutionaries are then presumed to be the successors to the present powers. It goes something like this: "If the moral leaders of the West favor our extremists, why should we not favor them too?" The internal South African debate is thereby circumscribed by choices made in the lands of the old metropolitan powers.

THE WESTERN TILT to the ANC undermines whatever slim chance there may be for the peaceful option articulated by Buthelezi and the moderates and liberals (mostly English-speaking but also younger Afrikaners) in his emerging coalition who are trying to break the stranglehold of the National Party over white politics. Buthelezi told the editors of TNR that we have not yet seen the beginnings of apartheid oppression. "They will scorch the earth," he said. It is a chastening thought. And it should incline us to the psychological breakthrough of the *indaba*. Instead, it may consolidate the moral authority of the ANC. It will be black South Africans who will suffer ever more under the apartheid heel. And suffer again in the inevitable war for purification and hegemony waged by the ANC and its inheritors. By then, of course, we will have long ago withdrawn our attention and our concern. If my imaginings of the possible scenarios are at all correct, decent people should want Buthelezi to have more influence in South Africa rather than less. This is not what is advocated by the very people who, as a political type, welcomed the victories of Mao and Castro, the North Vietnamese and the Ayatollah Khomeini. It is another sign.

M. P.

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